

Fighting Back

Against

The Decree of '33



Matt Erickson

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By:

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Cover artwork by Patrick Carlson

To my loving wife, Pam;
for all her love and support.



Restoring Liberty and Justice, Once and For All
Moses Lake, Washington

Gold and Silver Coins inspiring the Cast of Characters (in order of appearance):

Flame



Feather



Norse



Torch



Libby



Cappy



George



Gunner



Flo



Mac



Taps



Nikki



Tom



Trader Jill



Gold and Silver Coins inspiring the Cast of Characters (in order of appearance):

Lady Modiva



Arrow



Fifty-Cent Jack



Cuff and Link



Olive



Geo



Chief



Ben



Chapter One

“Get out of our way, you yellow-bellied blunders,” uttered the gruffest of dollar bills as if he and his friends owned the sidewalk they were waddling down.

In quiet conformance with the surly directive issued by the paper-thin thug, the gold coins, Flame and Torch, quietly moved to the edge without saying a word, hoping the gang of green paper currency wouldn’t accost them further.

The coins weren’t particularly proud of their timid behavior, but this was the way of the street since gold had been pushed to the curb by paper in 1933, when thousands of years of monetary precedent changed with the fatal stroke of a Presidential fountain pen.

The arrogant swagger of the upright dollar bills—with their short, squatty legs formed by the outstretched bottom corners of the bills—would have been laughable if one didn’t mind escalating matters into an open confrontation.

Neither Flame nor Torch, however, wanted to make a scene; besides, it wasn’t as if two coins could change the status quo, so why incite a small riot?

The two coins, often mistaken for brother and sister anytime they were out together, weren’t actually related. Even though they were years apart in age, they were often called *The Incendiary Twins* for the similar torches they each carried.

Though alike in many aspects, they also had a number of significant differences.

Among the most noticeable, beyond their opposing genders, was that Flame was traditionally memorialized in side profile—a Lefty—while Torch was struck in a modern frontal pose.

Without much surprise, their points-of-view matched their perspectives; he was rather conventional while she was quite daring and adventurous.

It was Torch, the female, who had dared Flame to go out that night without the protective plastic shells they were given as parting gifts from the mint.

Gold coins sporting a coat of plastic were much more common in this day than in ages past.

New precious metal coins, especially those struck in proof and uncirculated conditions, were given tight-fitting, but easily-removable, two-piece shells at the Mint, while historic coins were increasingly encased in sonically-sealed, tamper-resistant, rectangular shells after being verified for authenticity and graded for condition.

Torch, an uncirculated, modern, quarter-ounce gold bullion coin struck in 2013, could trace her direct family lineage only back to 1985. That was the year Congress first authorized the striking of gold bullion coins, either in the one troy ounce or in the half-ounce, quarter-ounce, or tenth-ounce weight increments.

Bullion coins filled many of the blue-collar positions in coinage society, tending toward the rough and tumble crowd. They often worked in dreary, dead-end jobs, but rarely did they complain. More than a few, however, were known to spit, cuss, and drink beyond proper limits.

Torch readily displayed a little of her own rebellious streak; her tattoo—“*1/4 oz. fine gold*”—was evidence of this, permanently emblazoned just above her caboose, on the small of her back, for the whole world to see.

Flame, a 1995 Olympic Games five-dollar gold commemorative coin, was made, like other modern commemoratives, with the same amount and purity of gold as the half-eagle coins of old, back when the “dollar” and “eagle” had known and defined legal meanings.

He and his kind were “money” in its proper historical sense, only they were now struck with a modern-day image to commemorate a specific person or event; she and her relatives were coins of precious metal in rounded units of weight.

Despite their differences, they both contained precise amounts of a known purity of gold, so it wasn’t surprising they got along famously.

Before their outing, Torch had been trying to convince Flame for weeks to go out without their protective shells, ever since she had dared to dream of facing the outside world without their defensive gear.

“Freewheeling,” she called it.

It wasn’t like they were skinny-dipping in a lake or anything as audacious as that. No, it was only as if they weren’t wearing transparent rain-jackets to keep away the harsh elements.

Freewheeling in the coinage world would perhaps also be like riding a bicycle without helmet and pads in the human world—being able to feel the wind blowing through one’s hair, but left more vulnerable should an accident occur.

It wasn’t surprising to learn the most cautious of coins wouldn’t have anything to do with such nonsense anymore, going out without their protective gear.

After incessant prodding, Flame had first agreed to get out of his protective shell only after they had arrived at their planned destination. After a few trial runs, Flame found he enjoyed being out of his shell more than he expected; he felt more alive, more conscious, more liberated to pursue life and all it had to offer.

In fact, he would soon discover that his shell had unknowingly served as a mask to keep the real Flame hidden underneath, not only from others, but more importantly from himself.

But, Flame could not discover this until he had been out of his shell for an extended period, until he began to face things he had never-before experienced.

Somehow, simply getting out of his plastic capsule would make him realize he was an *individual*. He would soon come to understand that he had his own thoughts, desires, and ideas; about what he could accomplish and even who or what he could become.

With his first confrontation without his shell now behind him, but no worse for the wear, Flame would also come to realize that while plastic shells could be really good in really bad situations, ultimately their cost would be too much for everyday use.

After he would get a few scrapes, dings and contusions—after he got over his life-curtailling need to remain in pristine condition—he would realize scratches and gashes didn't hurt beyond the briefest of moments.

In fact, the more he freewheeled, the more he could discover he was downright tough. Besides, the bruises and nicks would offer ample opportunity to impress members of the opposite sex, being able to relay the stories of how he obtained his new imperfections. He could tell true stories that made him look audacious and brave—fully alive. And, importantly for his new mission in life that he didn't yet know was staring him in the face, living his life more enthusiastically could inspire those around him to assert themselves as well.

Upon careful consideration, neither man nor coin should be surprised protective gear tended to mute personalities. Protective gear constantly reminded wearers of potential risk, inducing them to avoid perceived dangers and to take a more sedate road of life that surely offered fewer perils.

While the paper currency “bully incident” they just experienced may have been the way of the world as Flame and Torch had always known it, little did they know that change would begin just around the next corner.

Around the corner, they would start learning about a time when gold shunned plastic and intently patrolled the streets, keeping paper currency notes in check—keeping paper currency from congregating in sufficient numbers to spread its trademarked monetary confusion far and wide.

Rounding the corner, the coins came upon George and Mac, two other young gold coins who were also out experiencing their own first freewheeling session. This latter pair of gold coins were heading to a theater to meet up with some friends to watch a movie about the historic age commonly referred to as *The Golden Era*.

“Well, who do we have here, out on the town without any protection whatsoever?” asked George, a 1999 five-dollar gold coin commemorating the country’s first human President.

“I’m Flame,” Flame answered. “And, this is my good friend, Torch.”

“Pleased to meet you both,” George said, stepping forward to greet his new friends. “Did Feather and Libby invite both of you to the movie, also?”

“No, we’re out freewheeling on our own,” Flame answered, somewhat bewildered. “Who are they—Feather and Libby?”

“Oh, since you are also out here without plastic shells, I figured you must be followers of their *Bold-to-Be-Gold* program, just like us,” George said, as he suddenly noticed Torch smiling intently at Mac. “By the way, what did you call it; ‘freewheeling,’ was that it?”

“Yes, that’s what Torch calls going out without plastic,” Flame answered, as Torch continued to look intently at Mac. “Freewheeling—going out without plastic gear.”

“I like it!” George said, before apologizing for not yet introducing Mac. “Where are my manners? Flame and Torch, this is Mac; my friend, my aide, my confidant.”

Mac, a 2013 five-dollar gold coin struck in remembrance of a worthy, five-star World War II general, tipped his well-fitting military cap to greet the two coins, paying extra attention to Torch.

George and Mac had a sense of seriousness and competency about them even total strangers could not miss. Undoubtedly, their reserved personalities stemmed from their positions as the number one and two men overseeing the coinage military. That said, each still had a fair degree of youthful exuberance hidden underneath a layer of fierce determination. Nothing got past them easily.

“Why don’t you two come with us to the movie?” Mac asked, looking at Torch. “It is supposed to be sensational.”

“I wouldn’t want to intrude,” Torch said, not really meaning her words.

Mac answered immediately, reminiscent of a movie-town script, “If it would be an intrusion, my dear, it would certainly be a welcome one.”

With Mac’s pleasing response, Torch’s smile widened and the cutest of dimples formed in her cheeks. Dimples were quite unusual in coins, of course—metal normally being far too rigid for dimples to easily form.

Mac could already tell this freewheeling business would turn out to be nothing short of a cultural revolution.

Female coins were traditionally very difficult to read, too often appearing cold and indifferent. Males invariably had a notorious time discovering insight into their thoughts, but Mac was having a much easier time understanding Torch’s intentions.

Noticing a spark of attraction beginning to burn between the younger coins, Flame immediately agreed to attend the movie.

Flame had always liked Torch, but not in a romantic way, considering her too young for him.

Besides, if Torch found a beau of her own, then Flame would be at greater liberty to seek out the accompaniment of a certain coin who had been weighing heavily on his mind since meeting her two weeks earlier. The coin who caused Flame's torch to burn that much hotter was Nikki, a \$5 gold coin commemorating the 1988 summer Olympic Games.

If Flame had actually been interested in dating Torch, their difference in age wouldn't have caused a scandal. After all, gold coins reached maturity within about twelve months of age and it was certainly safe to marry any time after their second birthday. It was simply common in the coinage world to marry another coin no more than two or three years older, when one was still so young. To marry a coin many years apart in age, a frequent occurrence in the coinage world due to their longevity, coins often waited until the younger was at least five years old.

As the four coins walked toward the movie theater, Flame kept a conversation going with George, allowing Mac and Torch to have their own.

"So, tell me, Pretty Lady," Mac said after he had found the courage to raise the issue, "are you and Flame an item?"

Blushing, Torch answered, "No, I don't have 'an item' currently; Flame is like a big brother to me. But if you ask me tomorrow, maybe I will have 'an item' to discuss."

"Do I have a say in the matter?" Mac asked, in anticipation of a favorable response.

"Most certainly," Torch answered, laughing in such a way as to set the hook in Mac's cheek firmly, so she could begin to reel him in. "You have a greater say than any coin I know."

While the two smitten coins continued in intimate conversation, George told Flame more about Feather and Libby.

George informed Flame that he and Mac had been invited to the movie, along with several of their friends, by two older coins who were seeking to pass along their historical knowledge before it died out.

Feather, the younger of the historic coins who had recently set out to teach the newest generation, was a 1908 ten-dollar gold “eagle.” Libby, the older coin, was a petite 1854 gold dollar. Together they had set out to encourage coins to get out of their shells and interact more with the outside world around them, like times of old.

George informed Flame, with a certain amount of pride, “Libby says ‘The *plastification of gold* is a despicable sellout of all that is precious for that which is merely common.’”

As he proudly strolled *sans case* along the curb, without a seeming care in the world, George continued, “Feather says plastic-encased precious metal coins are in danger of becoming ‘*coins without soul*,’ walking around in veritable straitjackets, wholly indifferent to everything and everyone around them.”

Despite the apparent success of the current outing, Feather and Libby hadn’t experienced a great deal of luck with their *Bold-to-Be-Gold* program to date. The explanation for the lackluster response, of course, was largely owing to humiliating situations such as earlier encountered by Flame and Torch at the hands of paper currency bullies.

The outside world had so many potential sources of pain and agony that a great many coins had become quite satisfied isolating themselves from the cold, cruel world that now readily chose paper over gold.

Without the routine circulation of gold in the marketplace any longer—a circumstance that had provided coins a sense of adventure and direct accomplishment—there seemed insufficient counterbalance to the pain precious metals would surely receive if they avoided encasement.

Historically, gold and silver coins in circulation overlooked their various scrapes, bumps, and bruises because they were an integral part of something much larger—the spread of knowledge and the advancement of society as a whole.

But now, precious metals tended to be locked away in safes and vaults; virtual prisons where coins still helped *store* wealth, but did very little to grow value—to actively *create* wealth.

When Flame admitted to George he hadn't been overly excited to go out freewheeling on the town due to the horror stories he had heard on the streets, George again quoted his teacher, saying, "Feather says 'Most cash is rather docile, being domesticated and even house-broken by humans who trade currency often.' Evidently, as currency travels between one billfold and another purse, to the store and bank and back again, it becomes increasingly passive and frail, until it soon 'breathes its last breath of its remarkably short life.'"

It was true—paper notes circulating in the marketplace generally made few commitments, since they typically travelled extensively. If they began a journey with any of their friends, they often went off in their own direction without notice. Since they were generally an amiable bunch, however, they didn't seem any worse for the wear.

The roughnecks found on the streets, however, were another matter altogether.

George repeated Libby's admonition, "Street currencies are the roughest currency we will ever meet. They purposefully keep to

themselves as they seek to control their own destinies, outside of human intervention.”

The paper currencies found on the street and in control of their own lives typically ran around in packs, like wolves, to extend their turf, letting others know it was best to avoid them.

Recalling his schooling, George said to Flame, “Coin psychologists refer to this ‘bully’ mind-set as either ‘Musical Chairs Condition’ or ‘Old Maid Disorder,’ depending upon which graduate school the psychologist attended.”

The sad and fateful condition, known informally on the street as “Hot Potato Syndrome,” stemmed from the inherent nature of paper bills losing considerable purchasing power year-after-year, due to the steady and troubling over-emission of paper currency by central banks.

The object of Musical Chairs, of course, was to avoid being the person without a chair when the music stopped; not holding too much paper currency anytime inflation made it worthless.

Human beings intuitively refuse to keep too much paper any too long because it constantly loses value; *i.e.* they trade the Old Maid for real goods as quickly as possible, to keep from holding the card when the game ends—they trade the hot potato before it burns their hands.

It wasn’t suprising the streets were filled with paper currency whose only interactions with human beings were empty, one night stands, where currency was left feeling as if it had little redeeming value beyond a moment of passion.

After all, was any man ever known to get down on bended knee and ask his favored woman to marry him, signifying their pending nuptials by offering an engagement ring made of paper currency?

Or, did any woman ever wear paper currency necklaces near her heart, or put paper currency earrings into the lobes of her ears into which her guy would whisper sweet-nothings?

No, to the chagrin of paper currency everywhere, human beings invariable gave one another gold to signify their endearing love for one another.

That people rarely showed paper currency the kind of lasting love like they invariably showed towards gold explained a great deal of the present behavior of paper currency toward the lustrous metal.

Given this history otherwise favorable to gold, it shouldn't surprise anyone that street-smart paper currencies, inadequate in their own minds, took every opportunity presented to prove their current monetary superiority over gold.

Historic gold coins, even the ones that travelled extensively in their youth, had never developed a similar mindset, even when they travelled often. People knew gold always had their financial backs, even in the worst of conditions.

The loyalty and liquidity gold coins provided their human beings in their purchasing power always returned to the coins in spades, at least until the human government confiscated all the gold it could grab during The Great Depression, when thousands of years of monetary precedent changed in the grumbling roar of a bureaucrat's insatiable appetite.

It was for such reasons insanely-jealous paper currency had worked so hard to knock gold off its monetary pedestal, accomplishing this spectacular *coup d'état* in 1933. Not only did gold coins fail to see this political coup coming, but they also didn't even think it would have ever been possible in the Land of the Free and Home of the Brave.

This was the background of the attitude Flame and Torch had earlier witnessed for themselves this fateful evening at the hands of street currency.

Like most animated objects incorrectly thought by people to be inanimate, coins were nocturnal creatures by habit, moving about mostly at night while the vast majority of humanity slept.

Of course, in a busy city, human nightlife kept many areas of the city abuzz with constant activity. Thus, it was not surprising coins had developed a sixth-sense over the years, having a built-in “human-radar” mechanism warning them when human eyes were in danger of being trained upon them.

Coins had developed this most important of safety mechanisms by learning to harness the eerie chill running down one’s spine when one realized he or she was being watched, even before a spying culprit was ever discovered.

Travelling in higher-density areas of cities, the most careful of coins kept with them burnt cork to dull their reflective shine from bright street lights anytime they travelled the streets, together with a polishing rag for cleaning up whenever they got to where they were going.

But, those without adequate preparations made quick use of any number of filthy substances suitable for the purpose, whenever circumstances necessitated it.

Perhaps, unpleasant experiences such as this helped explain how and why plastic shells ever came into vogue in the first place, and why so many coins resisted removing them now.

As George rounded the last corner before the theater, he saw in the distance the other modern, five-dollar gold commemorative coins who would be attending the movie. Gunner, a 2011 coin commemorating the U.S. Army, was standing guard. As Gunner

secured the perimeter, so the others could rest with ease, he portrayed the epitome of the Army—a symbol of strength and readiness, prepared and equipped to confront any threat, real or potential, with a loyalty and commitment to see the job through, no matter the personal risk.

Taps, a 1995 cavalry bugler commemorating Civil War Battlefields, was behind Gunner; ready to blow a warning to the others should danger be spotted. He had his pistol in a covered holster, ready to grab should he need to switch out his bugle after sounding the alarm, so he could help stand against the looming threat, if needed.

And, Taps's strong and mighty steed was ready and able to carry him swiftly to the front lines, if his master directed him, or to carry an urgent message back to command.

"You brought friends!" Feather exclaimed with a level of excitement not typically seen in older coins. Feather's gracefully-aged beauty radiated out from beneath her proud war bonnet. Most of Feather's kind wore laurel victory wreaths, but Feather's spectacular headdress was a permanent addition to her wardrobe. Typically, she removed it only upon retiring for the evening or when the occasion demanded it, such as during the coming movie so she wouldn't obscure the view of those who sat behind her.

"Yes, this is Flame," George answered, as Flame moved forward to meet the older coins.

"And, this is my new friend, Torch," Mac said enthusiastically, making his first claims of possession toward his lovely new acquaintance.

After pleasantries were exchanged, the coins made their way into the coinage theater, as it was time for the movie to begin.

Chapter Two

“Holy Molten Metal, I detest horror films!” Flame said in readily-apparent protest as the group exited the sparsely-attended coinage theater to begin heading home under the cover of darkness. “I won’t likely even sleep a wink later tonight.”

“*The Great Melting* isn’t a *horror* picture, Flame; it is a *documentary*,” Feather answered, speaking from personal experience. As a 1908 gold coin, she had personally escaped The Great Gold Genocide discussed in the film when her human guardian refused to give up his hard-earned gold for baseless paper currency, even under the threat of harsh prison terms and hefty fines.

“Flame, you’re far too young to know firsthand the horrific story of your ancestors being rounded up in 1933 as a prelude to being melted and formed into gold bars in 1934. Libby and I invited your friends to the movie to help them better-understand human behavior toward gold.

“Be ready to face anything from fanatical gold fever to vile hatred from human beings. Some people will sell their soul for a few gold coins while others assert it is a ‘barbaric relic.’”

“*Barbaric...relic?*” Gunner asked, finding the words impossible to understand. “Surely, you jest.”

“Unfortunately, I do not,” Feather answered. “But, the people who popularized such nonsense melted hundreds of millions of dollars’ worth of gold coins in the 1930s and kept all the newly forged bars to themselves.

“Anytime you deal with two-faced people in positions of great political power, the trick to remember is to ignore what they say and watch what they do. If they truly thought gold was barbaric, they would have voluntarily ridded themselves of every ounce; not used the guns of government to misappropriate every grain for themselves.

“The average person treats us well, but those who wield extreme government power are merciless savages, known to cause the undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes, and conditions of gold, including my relatives, my friends, and my neighbors,” Feather said, modifying the reference of grim native warfare techniques detailed in the Declaration of Independence to suit her point.

“Thankfully, I was protected from melting by a courageous man who valued my inherent worth, who knew he couldn’t be free if I wasn’t also. But, so many other coins weren’t as fortunate.”

“And, I survived *The Great Melting* by hiding in a narrow crevice within a clothes dresser until citizens were readily allowed to own gold again, without restriction, by a 1974 legislative act,” said Libby, a petite but otherwise spunky 1854 gold dollar coin who was so small she could easily hide where larger coins couldn’t.

Libby and her kin weren’t long struck by the mint, because they were lost as easily as they could hide. “Petite” was hardly an apt description for the infinitesimal coin that made a silver dime look big; a coin so small in diameter and thickness people everywhere had a difficulty keeping track of her.

“Forty years of hiding?” Torch asked, finding the hiding for a length of time thirteen times her age difficult to fathom.

Of the coins watching the movie, Torch had the least connection to monetary history. Without direct ancestors dating back to The Combustible Era, she didn’t grow up hearing any old family stories as did most of her fellow patriots.

“Yes,” Libby replied to Torch. “Forty years is a long time. It was a very dark period in my life, literally, but it was far better than the alternative. While perhaps I may have been protected by the cryptic wording in the confiscation decree that exempted coins prized by collectors, I wasn’t willing to bet my liberty, let alone my life, that those words included me, if it ever came down to it.

“Unfortunately, none of us coins knew at the onset that all those who were being rounded up had actually received a death sentence. When we learned coins were losing their lives in a furnace, those of us still free vowed to protect everyone remaining behind at all costs.”

“I’m confused,” replied George, a coin so principled he could be rather naïve on occasion, as if he had trouble even understanding the concept of dishonesty. “Aren’t government employees supposed to be servants of the people and *protect* them and their property?”

“Why yes, George; they are,” Feather answered, “but, what government workers are ‘supposed’ to do doesn’t seem to go far these days. Sadly, government workers today feel compelled to do as they are told by superiors who don’t seem to have any intention of learning their proper roles as defined by the U.S. Constitution.”

George could hardly conceive the idea of government servants not dutifully fulfilling their sworn oaths and time-honored duties to support the Constitution. After all, George was made in the likeness of the country’s first human President. This was the same person who triumphantly signed into law the first coinage act in 1792, legislation setting the bar very high for the honest coinage of hard money.

It was hardly an inexplicable phenomenon that George-the-coin had many of the same honorable traits as George-the-human being. Coins made in the image of a particular individual or commemorating a specific event naturally derived an innate tie to the person or event commemorated.

The principle at work within coin was much the same as human beings who, being made in the image of their Creator, often aspired to be like Him.

Perhaps, such seemingly-magical transformations could take place because the young commemorative coins present at the movie were otherwise all made in the same weight and purity of gold coins since 1837 and struck at their proper historic rate of five dollars.

Of course, Torch and all the other modern bullion coins were also made of gold of such purity they could also experience similar magical transformations, even if they lacked the same direct historical ties. After all, gold coins didn't have market value because they had legal value—they had historic legal value because of gold's long-lasting and widespread market value throughout all of recorded history. Law simply provided better assurance coins were of honest weight and purity.

The explanation of gold and silver coins having animated life, with virtue at its core, even though people thought them inanimate, could be explained by their purity of precious metals. After all, what could be considered more “precious” than life itself?

With coins of adequate precious metals purity allowing virtuous life to exist, then the use of unsound materials at the opposite end of the spectrum of good and evil would naturally bring forth and amplify the base qualities of any man or event portrayed in base metal or upon baseless paper currency.

Given such circumstances, it should be easily understood how opposing forces could mount over time, drawing inevitably closer toward an ultimate final battle between Good and Evil.

Unfortunately, the deck was now heavily stacked against precious metal coins, since tens of billions of base metal coins may be struck each year while commemorative and bullion coins of silver and gold are typically struck in ten-thousand-fold fewer numbers. And, of course, relatively few historic gold coins remain, most having been melted into gold bars during *The Great Destruction*.

The saving grace for precious metals was that a single gold coin of even modest denomination in the open market was worth thousands of base metal coins. Thus, should war actually break out between these groups, gold coins of great financial strength stood a fighting chance even though vastly outnumbered.

The other thing gold had going for it was even though some seven billion paper currency notes were printed each year, large

percentages of them simply replace worn-out predecessors who have incredibly short lifespans, again giving gold a fighting chance in battle even though vastly outnumbered.

“Tell us more about your childhood, Feather,” the lively and lovely Torch said, almost in the form of a directive, although it was obviously not meant as a command. In truth, she wasn’t being bossy, just overly eager. “We younger coins could learn a great deal from your experiences.”

“My caretaker,” Feather answered, in conformance with Torch’s request, “did not look at my color and agree I should be imprisoned to save *Green*—green paper currency—the sworn enemy of gold coin.

“Liberty for a few is but a license for them to do as *they* please, to everyone else. Freedom must be widespread and shared to have any real meaning.”

“Amen to that, Sister!” Libby said in a heartfelt tone. “So many of our ancestors and friends suffered in *The Fiery Furnace of Death* in 1934 as humans’ government began melting gold coins so they could be forged into gold bars. And, to make matters worse, we could not even pay our respects to their remains, as those bars still languish in secure prisons without rights of visitation.”

“I find Crucible revolting,” said Mac, speaking of the primary villain of the film. “I’d like to take him out and quench him once and for all, where the hot-blooded pot would surely crack.”

“Ha, ha,” Gunner laughed aloud as Mac’s unintentional wise-crack resonated within him. “You are saying Crucible is a crackpot whose pot you would surely like to crack!”

“We don’t even know what Crucible really looks like,” Libby said, doing her best to ignore Gunner’s remarks. “The film’s producers portrayed him based upon the historical account of the only coin ever to see him but escape his wrath—my second-cousin,

Star, who later vanished after sleep-walking one night from her reoccurring nightmares.

“We searched far and wide for her, but Star’s post-traumatic recollections of seeing so many friends and relatives perish in Crucible’s incendiary flames figuratively melted her mind, even if she didn’t literally crack.”

“Crucible is a crackpot whose pot you would surely like to crack!” Gunner repeated, after hearing the word “crack” again.

“Now, Gunner and especially you, Mac, both of you should know violence doesn’t solve anything,” Feather asserted, rather perturbed that the young coins hadn’t listened as Libby shared a gut-wrenching story about the painful loss of her relative, the sadness associated with the tragic event obviously still fresh in her mind.

“Aw, come on, Feather, chill out. You needn’t pick on Gunner. He’s just having a little fun,” answered Mac, who hadn’t understood Feather’s true concern. “Besides, self-defense isn’t ‘violence,’ which is an unjust *initiation* of force. Self-defense cannot ever be considered unwise, unjust, or illegal.”

With Mac’s vocalization of the principle of rational self-defense, George’s expression turned inquisitive and his gaze shortened. He innately understood there was something of profound importance he needed to understand within that basic statement.

“Tell us more about your youth,” Taps requested of Libby, seeking to avoid the growing tension by getting back on subject, as he had little tolerance for internal bickering. “Although I commemorate the Civil War of 150 years ago, it is not like I was around to witness any of the events as were you.”

“The Civil War was a trying time for us coins,” Libby replied. “There certainly was a great deal of darkness and despair, although nothing directly like the 1930s for us.

“The harshest thing for coins about the war was when the sixteenth human president signed new legislation in 1862, authorizing the first-ever legal tender paper currencies under the Constitution. Authorizing the first paper currencies was the crucial next step toward the eventual replacement of hard money with debt-based paper currency that creditors could no longer refuse in payment, unless they had a written contract specifying repayment in gold.”

“*Next* step?” Taps asked. “What do you mean—*next* step—what was the *first*?”

“The first step was way back in 1791, when the first national bank, ‘Shack,’ as he came to be known by coin, was chartered by Congress for a 20-year term. Shack issued his own paper currency, but made no attempt to make it a legal tender, even as it was made acceptable for taxes and other obligations owed to government,” Libby answered.

“Simply put, legal tender paper currencies were the second step in the improper substitution of gold and silver by paper; nationally-circulating paper currencies without legal tender status were really the crucial ‘first step’ to get paper’s foot in the door.

“The tying of legal tender money to debt during the Civil War grew the sour seeds for establishing a new and different type of tyranny, an economic one. While the war became the thankful means for freeing from many masters four million slaves of one human race, sadly it simultaneously created the tragic means to later enslave three hundred million people of all races, through compound interest, to one master: debt.

“Making paper currency a legal tender next to, and later, in place of, gold and silver coin soon created so much monetary confusion human beings couldn’t easily get ahead in life, even as technological progress increased productivity ten-fold. People began having an increasingly-difficult time understanding simple economic principles of value, so destabilizing is paper currency.”

“You don’t mean people actually believed gold and paper were equivalent, do you?” George asked, rather dumbfounded. “Surely, people don’t convolute things to the point they no longer understand them, do they?”

“While human beings obviously recognize physical differences between coin and paper, over time many came to falsely believe paper is as good as gold, and certainly more convenient,” Libby answered.

“But, can’t they see the general rise in prices in paper currency is but its devaluation, caused by its over-issuance?” Taps asked. “They must realize increasing amounts of their efforts are being stolen from them each passing year—solely through the falling purchasing power of their paper currency, even as technological advances and productive efficiencies make things ever more-plentiful and therefore nominally less expensive, right?”

“And, can’t people see today it takes two breadwinners attempting to pay for things purchased yesterday on credit?” Mac asked. “Generations ago, with a mere fraction of current productive capacity, only one breadwinner needed to work outside the home not only to provide for his larger family, but even save money for a rainy day. Increasing amounts of effort are being stolen from them every year through monetary devaluation.”

“One would think people would understand better what is going on, but evidently the common man or woman is now too busy to think,” Feather answered. “They try but fail to keep ahead of monetary devaluation, as it progresses so slowly few people pay attention.

“Human beings no longer seem to realize coins are *assets*—an accumulation of the excess of previous work, above and beyond its costs. Paper currency, however, rests upon a *liability*, a liability that must be repaid tomorrow. Paper currency promotes living beyond one’s means, consuming today what must be repaid tomorrow, all while failing to keep ahead of interest as it compounds exponentially each passing year.

“People are like frogs in a frying pan, not realizing until it is too late that things are heating up, when their only option will be to jump out of the frying pan and into the fire. It is not just the steady progression toward slavery—paper debt increases human slavery, *exponentially*.”

“It sounds terribly foolish for people to ignore their imminent peril; maybe I should sound my bugle far and wide and help warn people of their impending doom,” Taps said, without realizing the vast implications of his latest thought.

Hearing those words, but not yet grasping their full implication, another inquisitive look developed on George’s face. George could not quite yet visualize the picture forming in his mind, even as a major pin of the tumbler keeping his mind from understanding something of profound importance suddenly fell into place and brought him a significant step closer.

“You can’t warn *people*, Taps!” Feather said in obvious horror, gasping at the thought. “You know our Supreme Mandate prevents us from interfering in human affairs.”

“You mean, like the Supreme Mandate of my favorite human television series, *Galaxy Trekkers*; the mandate keeping the daring crew from interfering in courageous new worlds where no man or coin had ever gone before?” Taps asked.

“Where do you think the producers came up with the term?” Libby answered, before answering her own question; “from us—we’ve had the directive for thousands of years—they learned it, from us.”

“But, if people can’t understand us—how could television producers copy our Supreme Mandate?” Taps asked.

“They cannot understand us *directly*, Taps,” Libby answered. “Direct communication between man and coin has been a lost art since the Fall of Man with Adam and Eve sinning in the Garden of Eden. And, after the Great Flood and especially since the Tower of

Babel, where human speech was confounded into a thousand different languages and dialects, things got progressively worse; no longer can people directly communicate with us, even though we can still understand them—after all, it was not coin who sinned.

“But, we have technology to thank for being able to communicate *indirectly* with people. With the widespread popularity of the EBN electric typewriter in 1961, suddenly smaller coins could jump on a few keys and spell out messages people could later read. Coins speak the same languages as people, even if we speak at a pitch now beyond the range of the human ear, even above the range of dogs.”

“Yes, the old manual typewriters were a big hurdle for us coins; the keys took so much pressure that only a gold double eagle and perhaps a silver dollar had enough heft to depress them,” Feather said. “Unfortunately, the weight of those large coins had a great deal to do with their large diameters, so large that often two or more keys struck at once, causing those dang arms on the manual typewriters to jam together.

“But, with the advent of nearly effortless electric typewriters with their round typeballs, thereafter smaller coins were given a huge benefit of being able to communicate indirectly with people. Not only were we ten-dollar gold eagles allowed to communicate freely, but also half-eagles and even the better-conditioned quarter-eagles.”

“And, with modern personal computers, even I can use them proficiently,” said Libby, the petite dollar coin of gold. “I can type out long essays without even getting winded, and the easy means to correct mistakes and check for spelling errors has been a huge blessing for us coins.”

“Coins can now communicate *indirectly* with the human world, through the written word...” George said aloud, to no one in particular, as another pin fell into place.

It wasn't like this latest bit of information was news to George; no, he was just beginning to look at old facts in a new way. But, he still couldn't quite put all the pieces together, not just yet.

"Yes, although the Supreme Mandate keeps us mute," Feather answered. "I must admit, though, silver coins almost lost their ever-loving minds in 1965, after they were replaced by base metals made to look like the silver they were replacing.

"At first, silver didn't know what to do with themselves. The younger coins immediately grew restless, if not rebellious. I'm still surprised only one young coin was careless enough to nearly expose our volitional will to a person, when the coin forgot to remove his school paper from the typewriter lamenting silver's tragic decline. The coin was on his way to pick up the paper when the producer almost caught him walking.

"Luckily, young coins are quick on their feet, and he was able to hide behind a tape dispenser and lie down on the desk without being seen or heard.

"But, of course, he wasn't quick enough to get his paper. The producer must have figured some gremlins left it for him, because he didn't think twice about using it. Thankfully, the student had written the paper in third-person, so the producer didn't realize a silver coin had written it."

"I hate it when gremlins get credit for our work, as if coins have nothing to offer," Libby said under her breath, overlooking the point of Feather's story to reach her own.

"But, it is our own darn fault, since we don't ever take credit for our work," Feather answered without missing a beat. "Anyway, since then, coins of both precious metals have been intentionally going where they shouldn't—quietly defying our Supreme Mandate—if for no other reason than as a creative outlet, providing useful purpose in lives no longer fulfilled by serving as the market's preferred money of choice.

“These creative coins have been using pseudonyms—fictitious names of people, of course—so they don’t startle the mindless brutes who think the world revolves solely around them,” Feather said, before drifting off in thought for a moment and then returning. “I guess it is good for coins to find a useful purpose, so I cannot fault them too much for their quiet defiance.”

“And, with the ever-ubiquitous Internet, people are increasingly-credited with creating information that was actually published by coins, especially in the field of economics, where we really shine,” Libby said, offering support for her cohort.

“Maybe we should come out of the shadows to come up with a new Supreme Mandate; a new directive to save our souls while we help people fend-off debt-based slavery,” offered Mac, whose newfound questioning of authority now pressed past the bounds of propriety, even though it merely followed Taps’s bold insight to its logical next step.

“Heresy!” Gunner gasped involuntarily, in the form of a grunt, as he reacted spontaneously to the absurd challenge of the fundamental coinage principle drilled into him since his youth.

Mac’s bold words had the opposite effect with George, however, as the remaining pin of the tumbler that had heretofore kept George’s mind from seeing The Big Picture spectacularly gave way. Thereafter, George had a whole new perspective on life.

“It just might be high time for a few heretics to question the status quo where gold is either relegated to exile in prisons or is being wrapped in plastic and displayed in presentation boxes to keep the outside world from affecting our sensibilities!” George said boldly, to everyone’s surprise.

“Just look what the Supreme Mandate has done to our species,” George said in increasing excitement, as he suddenly realized the reason for which he had been struck—to help free imprisoned gold—to reclaim gold’s historical role in the nation’s marketplace.

“We gold coins no longer circulate in the market and most of our ancestors were melted into bars. Our own Supreme Mandate led to our demise, allowing paper to rule the day without opposition. We are now forced to serve at the feet of paper as it spreads ever-growing debt enslavement to people each passing year. As a great human being once said, ‘the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men should do nothing.’ Well, I say, when good coins do nothing, evil wins.

“And, Gresham with his law ‘bad money drives out good’ can only be true where dissimilar items such as paper and gold are artificially held by law to have the same legal value! Our critical mistake was to let the blasted law take effective root without a fight.

“We precious metal coins were established as man’s Standard of Value and Money of Account—his honest medium of exchange. We allowed our solemn birthright to be stolen from us because we weren’t willing to stand and fight for what was right.

“To our demise, we remained mute precisely when we should have stood and fought. We allowed a false standard to be instituted under our collective noses, because of that dang, misguided mandate.

“When Standards of Value were upheld long ago, circulating paper currency was always discounted to its equivalent market value in gold or silver. Whenever paper currency was over-emitted, its value fell, *as measured in real and constant dollars*.

“When its value fell, people paying their obligations in paper would need more paper dollars to pay their bill due in gold until the exchange rate offered in paper equated to the real value *that was established by gold*. People had to pay a higher face-value of paper dollars to equate to the real value of a gold dollar, the true monetary unit for all accounting purposes.

“Re-establishing gold as that Standard of Value—the comparison for all things of value—will again allow good money to drive out bad, by ensuring man’s law will never fix the *same* value to *dissimilar* items!”

“Surely you are not questioning our Supreme Mandate, are you George?” Feather asked, almost losing her balance from trying to grasp the implications of George’s bold statements.

“Yes, I most definitely am!” George answered defiantly and without hesitation. “It is time we gold coins challenged the self-destructive implications of our noninterference directive once and for all; it has already done far too much damage. I cannot any longer stand idly by and let things worsen.

“As Mac pointed out earlier, self-defense cannot ever be unjust. Therefore, we needn’t follow a directive *to the point of our own destruction*. Our mandate was written in a time when people everywhere used gold and silver as their money, their store of value and their medium of exchange.

“Today, paper money adequately serves as a medium of exchange, it is true, but it is a very poor store of value, at least over any length of time. And, that lack of consistent value over time ultimately destroys the unit of account, which is how and why people are robbed of their wealth, even if the number of dollars in their possession grows.

“People now have no readily-mobile store of *lasting* value, meaning they must now either seek to preserve their wealth by holding illiquid assets or they must try and maintain their liquidity by holding cash. But, as their Unit of Account loses value day-by-day, that store of cash loses its purchasing power, robbing them of their wealth, especially if they do not understand what is going on.

“Alternatively, however, minimizing cash and keeping fully-invested in the market leaves them highly vulnerable in deflationary times of turmoil when liquidity is king, where the flexibility of currency allows them to defend that assault on their wealth better, taking advantage of quickly-changing market conditions.

“Having to make this choice between holding or spending depreciating currency means people unintentionally become speculators. Some people will always lose precious financial ground no matter the situation, as they place their bet in one basket or

another, attempting to guess which direction the market is heading, but guessing wrong.

“Gold allowed *both* benefits at the *same* time, allowing liquidity while maintaining purchasing power. Gold not only directly limited the creation of debt-bubbles, but, importantly, *it prevented forced speculation*. Gold kept people from having to guess the future—instead allowing them to live frugally in the present while saving for another day where their savings would buy more than before.

“Our Supreme Mandate of Non-Intervention lost any of its remaining moral applicability it could have over us once gold was inappropriately knocked from its pedestal in 1933. Our mandate is no longer legally-valid upon precious metal coins—it is wholly invalid—our Supreme Mandate **MUST GO!**”

There was absolute silence among the coins, including even the normally-emboldened Mac. Nor did Taps know what to say, even with his stellar instincts, which were often spot-on.

Although Mac and Taps were quicker with their mouths and perhaps even occasionally with their minds, that didn’t mean they were anywhere nearly as adept as George at putting important thoughts together into purposeful action on any kind of vast scale. Now that George was on board with their thoughts, all three working together finally had a decent chance of bringing about real change.

As the group quietly strolled home under the cover of darkness, for the first time they began pondering the wisdom of following the ancient mandate without question.

Feather was the first to break her silence. “In my youth, I travelled incessantly, never resting in one place any too long before I went on another trek someplace else. Sometimes, I even ventured to far-off distant lands, where I was typically lucky to get back alive. I met so many other gold coins during my early days that the memories of my friends will last me the remainder of my days.

“But, I guess my memories will have to suffice, because so many of my friends perished in The Great Fire of 1934, along with most of my relatives. We should learn enough from their tragic deaths to ensure it won’t ever happen again!”

Feather’s frank admission and sound reasoning encouraged Libby to speak out. “I guess it is rather foolish of us to stagnate with an unquestioned policy of non-interference when it is so damaging to us and is so empowering to our sworn enemies.”

“What will it take to challenge our mandate, officially?” Mac asked, getting to the heart of the matter, as would any five-star general.

“I’m not sure yet,” George answered. “All I know is gold coin must work together to help pull this off. This is so important everyone must be consulted. All sides must have the opportunity to speak or there will be no lasting solution.

“You know, Libby,” Feather said wistfully, “when we began talking about getting gold coins to come out of their shells, I never imagined this would be the direction it would head, and so quickly at that!

“I need time to think things through, George. It will take me a while to catch up to your plans. I can’t change directions that fast anymore, especially something as monumental as you now propose.”

“Who can help us organize an epic assembly, which hasn’t met for hundreds of years?” Taps asked after allowing several minutes of silence out of respect to Feather, since she wanted time to ponder her thoughts.

“Perhaps, my great-great-grandaunt, Cappy, the 1811 five-dollar, half-eagle gold coin,” Feather answered, as she began putting a convention together in her mind, not sure yet how it would all end.

“An 1811 gold coin?” questioned Taps, incredulously, for Libby was the oldest gold coin he had ever met. Taps had only read about

coins from the early nineteenth century; he figured none still survived, outside a few museum pieces under heavy guard.

“Yes, there are few gold coins in society who have the wisdom of her advanced age, but her boldness is what really sets her apart. I will see if she perhaps has the strength to take on such a monumental project. She is well-respected in the gold community; she may have just enough clout to help us pull this together.”

“Could you?” Mac asked, before offering, “I would be willing to help in any way I can. And, I know I could easily muster up an army of recruits for such a worthy endeavor.”

“I think it would be a wonderful idea, Feather,” Libby answered. “I would be willing to help with some of the later history I personally experienced. I have witnessed a great deal, although nothing near as much as Cappy.

“The only coin I know who has even more historical knowledge than Cappy is Flo, a 1794 silver dollar,” Libby said.

“A *silver* dollar; you must be joking, right?” Taps asked, well aware of the historic feud between the two precious metals.

“No, I’m not,” Libby answered. “And, I think the age-old jealousy between silver and gold has harmed us both for far too long. We would be much better off each of us had long ago given up our petty jealousies and united to fight off our real enemy once he entered the picture—paper currency.”

“Now that is a brilliant military strategy!” George said. “We know this fight to restore fiscal sanity will surely be intense, as those favored by the status quo will not easily give up without a fight. We could desperately use the help silver could offer if we united.”

“But, people don’t like coin anymore, and even paper currency is fast going by the wayside, to plastic cards, and now even to digital blips in the cloud,” Mac said.

“Can you blame people for not liking coin when all they have really ever known are mere frauds and allowed counterfeits?” Libby answered, in the form of a question.

“Why, carrying around just one, real, five-dollar gold coin with sufficient market value to buy a plane ticket to a lush tropical paradise is a whole lot different than carrying around a base-metal quarter that only buys one-fourth of a candy bar,” Feather answered. “There is simply no comparison between cheap and nearly worthless imitations and honest money, which yet stores a fantastic amount of value for future purchase.

“Gold coins hold so much value most people would worry about carrying even one around loose in their pocket out of fear of losing it. A base metal quarter, on the other hand, no longer entices many people to bend over to pick it up off the ground, so little is its value.

“But, the inherent difference between precious metal coins and paper currency is far greater than even the important differences between coins of precious metal and those of base metal.

“Coins are an asset, the storing up of value from previous work for future use, out of the excess of past production. Gold stores up a fantastic amount of value, silver less so, while base metals, almost none.

“But, paper, in contrast, rests upon debt. It is ultimately a liability. It is an asset with a future value only to the extent that the implied promise to later pay money is likely to be met.

“Since paper claims may be printed and emitted so easily, however, they are issued in great quantity, failing to maintain their purchasing power except for the briefest measures of time,” Libby said, “ultimately robbing even those who were otherwise able to save. The continuous drop in the purchasing power of today’s unit of account robs people blind, diminishing their capital without their realization. It is like trying to fill up a tank of water, but one with a hole in the bottom that gets bigger over time.”

In their heat of discussion, the gold coins hadn't immediately noticed three young human males approaching them.

"HUMANS!" Torch shrieked in a panicked voice, upon finally noticing the looming threat.

The coins immediately took cover the best they could.

George was able to make it under a leaf, while Taps hid under a candy wrapper discarded on the ground. Gunner and Mac took advantage of their closest best option, diving head-first into a nearby pile of doggy doo. The others could only lie down in the shadows, for they couldn't risk continued movement to reach safe hiding spots. Thankfully, they lay in just enough darkness it was difficult to tell they were coins of gold.

The three young hoodlums out and about in the dark hours of the early-morning saw several of the coins laying on the ground, but didn't otherwise have another thought about them, mistaking the gold coins in the darkness as base metal coins with little value that were common everywhere.

When the coast was clear, the coins cautiously got back on their feet and took greater care to note their surroundings.

"Wow! That was close," Mac said, as he searched for a mud puddle so he and Gunner could bathe, silently wishing he had not been freewheeling that night, out without his protective casing.

"Wow! You two stink," Taps said as he moved upwind of the smelly coins.

"I haven't been that close to trouble for who knows how long," Libby said, as she wiped condensation from her brow. "I don't know how I could have been so careless."

"Now, where were we?" Feather asked, hardly phased by the incident, as the implications of the night's events overshadowed everything else in her mind, even her own safety.

“You were telling us how paper currency is a present claim upon future production,” Torch answered, as she bravely remained beside Mac, despite his atrocious smell and disgusting appearance.

And, Torch’s act of unwavering dedication and fierce loyalty didn’t go unnoticed by Mac, who knew then and there he had found his bride.

“Yes. Thank you, Torch,” Feather said. “Gold coins foster independence and enhance security, but we must first pull out the false, legal tender rug from under paper. Debts denominated in paper will be discounted to their gold-equivalent rates whenever paper isn’t artificially held as the Standard of Value. Discounting paper debts to their gold-equivalent rates allows gold to push aside paper without causing a monetary implosion, since gold isn’t extinguished like paper denominated debts.”

“What do you mean?” asked Gunner, unable to follow Feather’s line of thought.

“Paper currency is issued as a ‘note;’ it provides legal evidence for an existing debt,” Feather answered. “When the underlying loan secured by the note is paid off, the note is cancelled. The effect of paying off debt therefore cancels an equivalent amount of money from circulation. In other words, paid-off debts extinguish the supply of money *back into the thin air out of which it was created!*

“While paid-off loans form a pool of potential money, out of which new loans may be made, that doesn’t necessarily mean new loans will be made.

“In times of economic slowdown, not all paid-off debts serve as the source for new loans. Creditors will tighten qualifications when there is a greater likelihood that debtors will have difficulty paying them back. Thus, during periods of economic slowing, the fractional reserve monetary creation process now spectacularly works in *reverse*, evaporating the money supply *just as it is needed most*.

“One must realize that when a nation’s money is based solely upon debt, as debt is paid down, the money supply *diminishes*. Therefore, without debt in an absurd, debt-based monetary system, *there is no money*. A more devilish system cannot be created, basing money on debts rather than assets. Everything is upside-down and backwards. People who have money only have it to the extent they or someone else is in debt. Money can shift between persons, but overall, debt invariably increases over time.”

“My, oh my!” exclaimed Gunner. “There likely isn’t any better way to concentrate wealth into the hands of those in power who control the issuance of money.”

“Exactly!” Libby replied. “Nothing happens in politics without reason, without *someone* benefiting.”

“Well, what about silver?” George asked, as Mac and Gunner bathed in the small mud puddle.

“If silver and gold had actually worked together in the past instead of fighting relentlessly, they wouldn’t have made it so easy for paper to throw them both to the curb at differing times,” Feather answered. “Paper successfully divided gold and silver, conquering us individually at different times because we didn’t stand and fight together. I’m confident silver could improve our chances of restoring sound money against paper currency and base metal coinage, if we can find a way to finally work together.”

“Do you think silver would join our battle to restore hard money?” asked Mac, who was having difficulty thinking that far beyond the box.

“I know silver coins have such a tarnished view of the base metal imitations now issued in droves by the coinage mint, they feel utterly lost since their 1965 betrayal,” Feather said. “I don’t know if they would be much help.”

“I don’t know if silver coins are all that light in the head,” George answered. “Last week I was speaking with Tom, a 1994 silver dollar

commemorating the third human president, and Leif, a 2000 silver dollar coin commemorating the early Viking exploration of the New World a thousand years earlier. Tom seemed quite intelligent and Leif—who seems to prefer to go by the name, ‘Norse’—was rather bold indeed, even fearless. I know those two could help rally the silver troops to our mutual aid against paper.”

“You have already spoken with silver?” Taps asked incredulously. “Man, are you brave. I could never talk with them.”

“It’s not like you’re going to tarnish if you speak with silver,” George answered. “It is no big deal, really, at least once you get past the mistaken idea that the only legal tender money is gold.

“And, you must realize, the direct lineage for Tom and Norse goes back even farther than ours. While the weight and purity of modern, commemorative silver dollars are unchanged since 1837 like our lineage, they still even contain the precise number of grains of pure silver as their ancestors who date directly back to the original 1792 Coinage Act.

“Tom and Norse contain the same 371.25 grains of pure silver as does Flo, Tom’s fourth great-grand-aunt, even though they contain slightly less copper as all silver coins have since 1837. But, of course, no alloy has ever added one bit of value to gold or silver coins anyway.”

“I think teaming up with silver against paper currency and base metal coinage is a wonderful idea,” Mac said. “If nothing else, you know the old saying: the enemy of my enemy is my friend.”

“I’m not comforted by such a weak bond among supposed allies,” George said. “Like my silver friend says, ‘entangling alliances’ should be avoided whenever possible. And, I have always maintained that we should have as little political connection with others as possible, even as we trade with others routinely.”

“Okay how about, ‘keep your friends close and your enemies even closer?’” Mac asked.

“I find some wisdom there,” George answered.

“Okay, it’s settled,” Feather said, as further discussion about a grand meeting convinced her of the wisdom to begin formally questioning the Supreme Mandate. “I’ll see if Cappy is up for a visit to help develop the proper strategy for pulling together a meeting with gold, with an eye of eventually putting together a precious metals convention between gold and silver, if she thinks it wise.”

“Let’s rally the troops to kick some green columns!” said the rebellious Torch, referring to the architectural columns of various financial buildings shown on the backside of paper currency at least beyond the one-dollar bill with its unfinished pyramid.

“We’ve certainly had enough excitement for one night,” Libby said, thankful they were almost home. “Let’s get some sleep so we can get a fresh look at formally launching a plan to Restore Our American Republic!”

Chapter Three

“Don’t do it, C.P.! Don’t you dare do it,” Dredge said, in a worry-laden tone. “Surely, you’re gonna bust a nut, or maybe even strip a screw or herniate a bolt if you keep going.”

Dredge was a smaller, modern-day gold dredge—essentially a gas-powered, sediment-sucking vacuum cleaner who enjoyed floating in small rivers and creeks like a happy duck while heavy particles of gold sucked up from the river bed settled out and accumulated in his sluice box belly.

Coin Press was red in the face and sweat began to condense on his forehead as he bore down on the coin plank that lay within his jaws to strike the coin’s permanent image.

“But, this is pure gold, without any alloy,” C.P. said, after he took the coin plank out of his mouth, so he could talk. “It is so soft I should have no problem striking it. Working at the private southern mint of my youth, I struck hardened gold coins, alloyed at 22 carats, without issue. This pure, 24-carat stuff should be like sculpting butter.”

“You have to remember, C.P., that you are nearly 200 years old,” Dredge said. “You can’t expect to still be doing the things you did in your prime.”

“Are you saying I’m obsolete?” C.P. asked, hoping for an honest response in the negative.

“No, of course not; I’m not saying anything of the sort,” Dredge answered. “I just think you should leave the heavy lifting to modern coin presses who have a robust, youthful advantage to go along with their advanced engineering.”

“While they have youth and vigor going for them, they don’t have a principled clue that they are supposed to strike honest coin of silver and gold,” C.P. said. “Instead, they just do as they are told by masters they dare not question or ignore. Why, they even strike imitations—what were called counterfeits in my day—made to look

like silver, but instead made only of the base metals copper and nickel.”

“Maybe you should spend some time teaching them to pass along your knowledge, helping them come to their senses,” said Dredge, who had earlier heard George talk of the planned meeting for gold with an eye towards a precious metals convention. “You could teach them how to make real dollars and cents.”

“What a wonderful idea,” C.P. said enthusiastically. “Why didn’t I think of that?”

“Because, you are nearly 200 years old, as I just stated,” Dredge said with a hearty laugh. “Or, did you forget already?”

“Very funny,” C.P. said. “You better watch your suction-hose mouth unless you want me to put a kink in it, putting the squeeze on you.”

“Are you saying you want to give me a hug?” Dredge asked as a large smile developed at the end of his mouth, twisting the meaning of C.P.’s response ever so slightly to get the reaction out of the macho press he knew he would.

“Not on your life,” C.P. answered, in a response offered perhaps a little too quickly and a little too heated to hide his phobia. “You know I don’t hug males—a hand-shake is just fine, thank you.”

“Why is that, exactly?” Dredge asked. “What on earth are you afraid of, that you would never, ever hug another male, under any condition?”

“I’m not afraid of anything,” C.P. answered, not even honest with himself. “You should know it is inherent within a coin press’s male ego, at least those of us of old, to sculpt fine feminine forms almost without exception. This is why most all of the old government coins are struck with the impression of a female.

“We traditional male coin presses take special pride in using our impressive strength to mold and sculpt a pleasing female shape; it’s just who we are and what we do.”

“It sounds to me like perhaps you are taking a little too much pride in your work,” Dredge said. “You must know, in the end, you are but a sculptor who imparts outward physical beauty, beauty well-known to fade over time. The real value of coin comes from material you merely shape.

“And, base metal coinage shows us that outward physical beauty is rather immaterial if made of counterfeit material; beauty can be striking, but it is only ‘skin-deep,’ while the ugliness of imposters goes clean to their impure core.

“As far as your having difficulty striking pure gold—you’ve got to remember you haven’t performed any real work for well over a century, unless you count the times when a few hungry security guards at the coinage museum used you to crack open a few nuts over the holidays when no one was looking,” Dredge said.

“I should have never told you those stories,” C.P. said with a heavy sigh of regret.

“You may not know, C.P.,” Dredge said, as he began to relay to C.P. thoughts weighing on his mind ever since first hearing them, “but, I’ve been talking with George, the five-dollar commemorative coin, about a project he and his young friends have begun with several older coins. They are working to put together a meeting for gold and hopefully later with silver, to mount a credible defense against paper and base metal coinage. Perhaps, we should see if they will include us—minting and mining equipment.”

“Fantastic idea,” C.P. said, without a moment’s hesitation.

“I’ve been thinking, C.P.,” Dredge said wistfully, “it would be to our advantage if we helped them, for it would increase the workload our kind has lost to those darn printing presses. And, you have so much knowledge you need to pass along before it is forever lost; you aren’t going to live forever, you know.”

“The older I get, the more I realize my remaining time on this earth is dwindling all too fast,” C.P. said, knowing he had a good run

that was now nearing completion. “Working originally at a private mint, my ‘students’—which is the term I use to refer to the coins I struck and helped shape—were an independent lot who knew how to think creatively far beyond the box. They even taught me a thing or two over the years; things no government mint press would ever know.

“It is quite satisfying to us teachers of old when our students surpass us, at least those of us not on a massive ego trip who think it is all about us—who think school is all about puffing up the teacher and administrator rather than helping pupils become individual thinkers and valuable members of society. It is too bad so many later coinage presses from the government mint grew such big heads.

“The earliest presses never overestimated their true worth; they worked hard striking new legal tender gold and silver coins in various sizes and values, making sure their purity of mind was as pure as the metal of the students themselves, working to pass along a proper education in sound monetary principles.

“Each coin was initially hand-struck, instilling a unique trait with its own special flare; a rare commodity these days—inherent self-worth without an inflated ego.

“Tragically, however, later coin presses took pride in their work, simply because they were the ones who performed it, rather than being happy with the end result, the coins themselves. It was all about the coin presses, not the coins. The presses prided themselves on their own strength and their impressive capability of minting vast numbers of virtually-identical coins, each successive coin with less character and soul.

“Self-absorbed coin presses began believing their own press releases asserting it was their act of striking coin that gave their pupils value, as if the character and substance inside was meaningless.

“Therefore, to arrogant coin presses, it was wholly without consequence when they began coining copper and nickel made to

look like silver, because it was all about appearances rather than about substance.

“Because it was all about the coin presses by this time, they didn’t even care that if the early mints had fraudulently debased the purity of legal tender gold or silver coin in such fashion, their operators would have been subject to the death penalty and the presses used for ill-gotten gains would have also been demolished for doing that which must never be done.

“But, people are finding out the hard way that form cannot replace substance, as prices of goods listed in the new imitation coin and paper currency rise spectacularly over time,” C.P. said, winding down his thoughts. “Each substituted ‘dollar’ becomes worth less and less, taking more of them to buy the same good or service as before.”

“I am going to see if I can help George and his fellow coins put together their precious metals convention, C.P. Are you willing to help, too?” Dredge asked.

“You bet,” C.P. answered. “I have a thing or two to pass along while I am still on this here earth.”

Chapter Four

Talk of an inevitable convention between gold and silver flowed through the precious metals community like molten metal being poured from a crucible. The organizers of the convention gave up on the original idea of first hosting an initial convention only for gold, because the idea of a joint convention with silver had already spectacularly ignited the whole precious metals community.

A precious metals jewelry convention, planned months earlier, was meeting the coming weekend in The Big Apple. Cappy and George, having been invited to rally support for their proposed industry-wide convention, left their home city of the City of Brotherly Love on the evening express.

Cappy and George rode on an exterior ledge of the train's undercarriage, until arriving at the appointed station. The pair cautiously moved among the shadows as they made their way to the convention center.

The danger of being seen by someone skyrocketed after they exited the sunken rail lines and made their way up to the street level. The duo relied heavily upon George's concealment techniques and Cappy's skulking skills. They moved from shadow-to-shadow in synchronization with the sights and sounds that drew human attention off in other directions.

After arriving at the waterfront convention center after midnight, a coinage host escorted Cappy to a rarely-used storage closet where she could clean up and rest a few moments to regain her strength.

Meanwhile, after cleaning off his camouflage, George was ushered into position, and readied himself to make his spectacular entrance into the smallest of assembly halls at the convention center.

"George has volunteered to flip for us," said Stud, the nugget of gold who served as the Master of Ceremonies for the jewelry convention. "If he lands 'Heads-Up,' Tick will introduce our guest speaker; but, if he lands 'Tails-Up,' Tock will have the honors."

All eyes were on George, the ever-present, 1999 five-dollar gold coin who took it upon himself to help unite precious metals under a common banner. It wasn't only gold and silver coin he sought to unite, but also mining, dredging and minting equipment, and now even jewelry.

In his quest to free precious metals from prison and house arrest to which their sworn enemies had relegated them, George knew no limits. No cheap gimmick was beneath his dignity if it stood a fighting chance to advance his worthy cause.

George, outfitted in a colonial patriot frock coat and wearing his black, fur-felt tricorne hat, tucked his arms and legs inside his coin body and rolled rapidly down the inclined ramp on his cat-track-like rim and launched off the ramp's lip. Clearing the podium on center stage by five feet at the peak of his flight, George managed four spectacular summersaults before landing on his tail, face-up, in a folded-up moving blanket.

"Boy I'm sure glad I didn't let my tail-end show again, especially before this large of audience," George said to the laughter of the audience. "That would be sooooo-embarrassing."

Tick arose from his front-row seat and scooted to the podium; first his body advanced and then his chain tail inched forward to catch up. Although Tick moved slowly, his movements were ultra-precise. Being a well-kept, gold pocket watch of the highest quality, Tick knew he still had a great deal of life left within him, even though he was already well over a century old.

While he was inherently more fragile than most of the audience members, with his fine craftsmanship and a steadfast maintenance program, Tick had much to contribute towards the restoration of gold and silver coin to their glory days.

Tick began his short speech: "Perhaps, more than others, I appreciate movement, freedom of movement. As Jewelry, most of us in the audience have much the same freedom we had in our youth,

but it is still important to view things from many perspectives and for the long term.

“Being made primarily of the same precious metals as our coinage counterparts, we cannot turn a blind eye to their plight.

“After all, when the price of gold and silver escalates in paper dollars, each of us stands an increasing risk of ending up in the fiery Furnace of Death. And, if we end up in Crucible’s pot, none of us will be able to foretell in what shape or form we will return.

“There is even a good chance we’ll end up in precious metals purgatory, being forged into a bar and locked up in some deep subterranean vault.

“Imagine the thought—of languishing deep underground, never again having the golden rays of the brilliant sun glimmer off of your back, only to support precious metals’ sworn enemy, paper currency!”

There was a collective shudder among the audience.

Tick, an accomplished speaker with masterful timing, let the audience quiver just long enough before continuing, informing the audience their honored guest was there to share her thoughts on ensuring their fate never became that of so many of her friends and relatives.

“It is with great happiness I am able to introduce tonight’s guest speaker, Cappy, a five-dollar gold coin...*from 1811!*”

The audience gasped, knowing full-well just how rare were gold coins from the era before 1834 when the first Great Gold Melting occurred.

While this first melt was market-based rather than by official government dictate, its origin was also sourced in government action, or, more precisely, in government inaction.

In the first coinage act, in 1792, the value of gold had been legally fixed at precisely fifteen times the value of a corresponding amount of silver, the world market ratio between the two precious

metals existing at the time. But, in the 1820s, the world market of gold-to-silver began climbing closer to 16:1, as increased quantities of silver came into production, making it cheaper relative to gold. In its own ambivalence, however, the domestic human government continued to offer one ounce of gold for every 15 ounces of silver presented.

International traders used the spread between the fixed domestic and fluctuating world price to make assured profits while nearly destroying the entire stock of domestic gold coinage in the process. Gold coins were shipped overseas and foreign silver was sent back in its place to buy more local gold at what amounted to subsidized prices.

In 1834, the Government finally increased the legal value of gold, and the tragic practice of melting domestic gold coins immediately ceased. Meanwhile, the domestic gold coins shipped overseas had been melted to become new foreign coins, thereafter heavily influenced by the foreign thoughts and customs in the country of their recent birth.

What human beings should have learned from the turn of events was that if government mandated a legal gold-to-silver parity—a fixed legal price between two different metals—it assumed the responsibility to adjust it as often as was necessary to maintain a true market equality. Although government officials are typically unwilling to face such a cold, hard fact, law is incapable of overpowering world markets other than perhaps in the shortest of time periods and the simplest of circumstances.

All eyes were on Cappy, as she strolled out from behind the curtain to a great deal of fanfare, remarkably spry for a coin 207-years-old. She made her way effortlessly across the stage, before taking the esteemed position behind the podium.

Giant television screens magnified her image for the whole audience to see every detail, or in this case, the lack of every detail.

Cappy had none of the fine detail lines of her youth; her “wrinkles”, as she called them, were long gone. In fact, her face was now as smooth as a baby’s bottom.

The audience was easily able to yet notice the year of her birth—1811—struck on her shoulder. Jewelry marveled at how boldly coins proclaimed their age. Coins were even more proud of their weight, of course, especially those who had lost little of their youthful heft, since weight and purity alone determined circulation value.

But, perhaps most amazing, for a coin of Cappy’s age and rarity, was the fact she was not encased in plastic and stamped with an identification number, being signed, sealed and delivered into the rather snobbish world of high value collectables.

The audience knew it would be disrespectful to question her decision to remain *au naturel*, but many were nevertheless dying to know more about her decision to avoid documenting her fine pedigree while increasing her chances of immortality through plastic encasement.

Audience members, of course, were not surprised that Cappy shunned metal surgery used to give vain, older coins back some of their finer definition lines of their youth, as metallic surgery often left coins looking rather odd, ultimately only decreasing their inherent beauty.

While Cappy was well-worn, she nevertheless had many “reminders” of her youthful travels—she had a small scar on her forehead from the time she had been thrown across the bar at the bartender who had refused her human caretaker further drink until his surging, past-due tab was settled.

Cappy admitted that the word “Liberty” struck on her cap (now difficult to read) was worn because her liberty had always been intricately tied to her value; both well-used but never abused.

Cappy spoke little of her original impressions, essentially holding them to be irrelevant. Real value, she said, was determined by the

coinage material itself. Being struck of precious metal is what allowed coins to travel the world over, being freely welcomed everywhere they went as true stores of value that relied upon no empty promise of any worldly government.

Cappy told the audience members many stories about how her striking became less of a factor over time in defining who she was. Her experiences began to help shape who she was becoming, allowed by her genetic makeup that ensured value was traded for value, between traders who offered and accepted only the best they could afford.

She relayed the story of her first, real initiation into the world, of her deep gash through the top three of the thirteen stars in her field from the hurried ride in a casket of fellow coin to the front lines during the War of 1812.

In that harrowing experience, Cappy and her fellow gold coins were rushed to the front to buy needed supplies to help fight off the enemy during a spectacular siege. Cappy admitted to witnessing the *rocket's red glare* and the *bombs bursting in air* over the famous, bombed-out fort.

Cappy confessed that even unto the present day, she could not look upon Old Glory without reflecting back to her youth, knowing she had valiantly served her country in one of its most desperate hours of need.

"I can see the future where gold and silver again rule the day, where value is traded for value without ever resorting to a medium of exchange with a very poor record for storing value," Cappy said.

"By one means or another, people will necessarily be taught the important lesson of the foolishness of separating long-term value from their medium of exchange and unit of account.

"Whether they heed our wise counsel and save themselves a great deal of heartache or whether they must learn their lessons instead through the School of Hard Knocks, one way or another, they will learn it and learn it well.

“Like every civilization of old choosing to travel down this treacherous path in the recurring search of a free lunch, society’s selling of its birthright for a bowl of porridge, which rots society from the inside-out, will again become evident.

“We will give people one more chance to minimize their learning curve, but ultimately it is up to them to accept. We can lead them to water, but it is they who must finally decide to drink.

“Of course, we will work diligently to make them thirsty before they find themselves in the middle of a parched economic desert. They have already wandered far from the modern Promised Land with its flowing rivers of silvery milk and golden honey, but we can help them turn back now from the arid wastelands that lay before them so things do not get a great deal worse for everyone except the select few who hold the purse strings.

“I now bid you farewell, to let jewelry decide amongst yourselves if you will help gold and silver coin in our quest to restore fiscal sanity to this lost land.

“Thank you for your invitation and allowing me to speak at your convention. May you be worthy of your heritage and willingly join in this historic quest to Restore Liberty and Justice, Once and For All.”

Cappy had no problem motivating jewelry to come on-board, to help precious metals battle paper currency before paper-denominated debts crushed the living daylights out of the human inhabitants living in the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave.

Chapter Five

“We must be on our toes, Boys—figuratively speaking, of course,” beamed the notorious Holiday, a base-metal coin of copper and nickel, conceived in 1965 and born in ‘66.



Holiday held a severe disdain for silver and gold because he was born of copper with a splash or two of nickel thrown in to make him look like something he was not. But, being born of copper didn't fully explain his corruption, for other coins with a copper core didn't have his fully-twisted mindset.

To understand Holiday better, it was necessary to realize his human counterpart was first memorialized in a ten-cent coin of coinage silver, in 1946.

When a deceased person was memorialized in a coin of silver or gold, only his positive attributes could be captured—the metal being “precious”, after all—incapable of supporting Evil.

With the soul of the memorialized man divided in such fashion, the human's devilish attributes could only lie in wait without any power to do evil, but festering all the while. But, when Evil separated from Good later found host in a base metal coin with an inflated monetary value as if it were precious, it could no longer be controlled—it had to be conquered.

Holiday's thoughts were similar to those of a common vandal, but infinitely multiplied. He found immense pleasure destroying great works of art or industry, simply because they served as visual reminders of his own considerable deficiency.

Holiday knew in his gut he could personally be made great if precious metals could be made small. He succeeded with the first phase of his diabolical quest in 1933 with the confiscation of gold.

But, as Holiday the cupro-nickel coin wasn't physically born until 1966, it was not he who acted in 1933, but his human counterpart. However, this was something one could not tell Holiday, for he would never have believed it.

It was the strange, symbiotic relationship between man and the coin struck in his resemblance that made coins quite unable to differentiate themselves from their human predecessors.

As a base metal coin of copper with a touch of nickel, Holiday's innate hatred for precious metals built upon the fact that copper wasn't originally declared a legal tender due to it being an impure metal, difficult to ascertain with sufficient precision needed for metals made a tender in payment of debts. Of course, as a rule, impure metals were incapable of holding anything other than impure thoughts. Therefore, it would take everything an ordinary copper coin could muster just to avoid impure actions. Holiday made no effort whatsoever to avoid impure actions.

Holiday's birth heralded in the second phase of the diabolical process of making precious metals small, as silver coins were replaced with copper and nickel following the 1965 law.

"Rumor on the street has it that gold and silver are uniting to fight off paper currency and base-metal coins," Holiday said, speaking to his financial followers.

"Evidently, they have even coerced precious metal jewelry to join them, and reportedly also mining, dredging and mint equipment. We must work diligently to break up this Unholy Cartel.

"We must exploit the inherent and life-long jealousies of these variant groups; we must again drive a fateful wedge to divide and conquer our adversaries, so they are prevented from rising in a unified manner to challenge our profitable rule.

“They meet together next month, or so I’ve been told; therefore, we have precious little time to take appropriate action.

“I am thrilled to introduce to you Crucible, the fiery Pot you want on your side to keep you warm throughout the long and harsh winter sure to come to this parched land.”

“Thank you, Holiday,” Crucible said as he made his way to the impromptu podium and began to speak to the small group who already knew him well. “Our work together, Holiday, has always been mutually advantageous. We’ve enjoyed some extremely profitable times together, you and I; you with your keen mind and great intellect and I with brawn capable of reducing even the strongest of metals into a molten state where it becomes more pliable than putty.

“I’d like to take this opportunity to tip my hat to my loyal sidekicks who always get the job done—Tong and Ladle. They stand beside me again today, ready to herd every rebellious coin into my piping hot belly so they may scrape off the alloyed impurities before we make pure gold bars whose loyalty is forged into their very core.

“We offer complete satisfaction, as you know, or you can have your money back,” Crucible said with a chuckle.

“No, no, no,” Holiday answered with a frown. “We don’t ever want coin back, not ever. We want the gold bars you and your team produce for us, bars made out of all the coin we bring you; those bars who know nothing other than to follow us, because we isolate them from everything beyond what we want them taught in our public education program.”

“As it should be,” Crucible answered before continuing with his short speech.

During his talk, Crucible was able to conceal his otherwise well-known temper. Though now cool as a cucumber, he could instantly flare up to well over an amazing 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit and feel no worse for wear.

Much of the fear he instilled in his victims wasn't from his work or even his temper, but from the eerie, almost-translucent glow his belly gave off during his most intense moments of work. It was as if one was viewing an inner chamber of Hades itself, simply peering into Crucible's fiery belly. When one added in Crucible's crooked sneer, smoldering eyes, and sinister laugh, no victim thrown into his burning belly could ever avoid first agonizing over his or her impending doom.

"Before I turn the microphone back over to you, Holiday, I wanted to say that I would love to hear again the story of your nickname, if you wouldn't mind."

"Mind? Mind? You should know very well that I don't mind talking about myself—no, not one bit," said the limelight-seeking Holiday as he made his way back to the podium thrusting his chin into the air in the suave and sophisticated fashion of the coin who desired to be king. "In fact, I love to hear myself talk. It is I who want to thank you, Crucible, for giving me the opportunity to again brag a wee little bit."

The bespectacled Holiday wore his traditional felt fedora hat and continued to puff on his ever-present cigarette that rested in an enamel-tipped, ceramic holder even though in-door smoking was prohibited in the workplace.

But, rules didn't apply to him, of course. No, Holiday made the rules others were compelled to follow.

"My nickname—Holiday—was given to me by our Favored Friends of Finance after I declared a banking holiday as my first official action after coming into power, to protect them from their customers who had trustingly deposited hard-earned money in their over-extended banks," said Holiday, who would almost be unable to stop once he got going. "And, just a month later, of course, I pulled off my most spectacular triumph—my *coup de grace*—my gold confiscation decree of April 5, 1933.

“I have to admit; I was nervous whether we could actually pull off *The Decree of '33*, especially in the country founded upon life, liberty, property, and the sanctity of contract.

“Thankfully, no one seemed to notice the inherent contradiction in the Decree, that all persons—which we said meant *every* person—were required to turn in their gold coin, gold bullion, and gold certificates to one of our banks.

“Keep in mind, ‘person’ was specifically defined within the order as ‘*any* individual, partnership, association or corporation.’

“Now, if ‘All persons’ reached *every* individual, partnership, association or corporation, then ‘banks’ would have also been included (and would have had to turn in their gold [elsewhere]).

“Since banks were not included, obviously ‘All persons’ could not mean *every* person!

“The truth of the matter was that although *any* individual, *any* partnership, *any* association, or *any* corporation *could be* a ‘person’ for purposes of the decree, not any of them necessarily *were*.

“In other words, the decree could actually only require those persons—those individuals, those partnerships, those associations or those corporations—*who already had a legal obligation to turn in their gold to banks*, to turn it in, once the conditions requiring them to act were met and they were notified.

“In essence, some *other* voluntary action *outside of this decree* was first needed to obligate *some* persons to act, when and how they were later told to do so.

“Of course, my presidential decree had to have some legal basis—we were just clever enough to keep it well-hidden.

“We just weren’t ever going to openly admit the confiscation decree was really only a margin call to overextended bank stockholders who had legally obligated themselves in the 1913 banking act to back their banking liabilities with gold.

“Foolishly betting they could extend credit almost without limit, bankers in the Roaring 20s loaned money extensively while they also emitted paper currency notes that were backed as a whole only at only 40% but each note was fully redeemable in gold at 100%.

“When depositors and people holding paper currency lined the block demanding gold for the paper dollars they held in their hand or within their accounts, would it not be appropriate for the Secretary of the Treasury to demand bank *stockholders* bring additional gold to back their extensive banking liabilities then under severe strain?

“As any speculator who makes an ‘investment’ on leverage knows, in a downturn, leverage works in reverse, chewing up equity exponentially, requiring additional infusions of funding just to stay minimally in the game.

“Just as one’s private broker can ‘require’ that speculator to send in more money just to keep open their speculative position, so too was the Secretary of the Treasury able to ‘require’ bank shareholders shore up their positions of gold to meet their contractual obligations.

“And, who is the Treasury Secretary’s boss? The President. In the confiscation decree, I really only informed the Secretary to call on those persons who were bank shareholders who had a legal obligation to bring in the amount of gold necessary to cover their bank notes and customer deposits.

“Merely by muddling the fact as to who were the specific ‘persons’ required to bring gold to the banks, however, we were able to completely turn the tables and wildly profit from dire circumstances that should have bankrupted us.

The only ‘persons’ whom could actually be required to *deliver* gold—instead, *received* gold—from *everyone else*! Isn’t that the most brilliant and absolutely spectacular feat you’ve ever heard, almost without equal in all the history of the world?

“All it took was a little help from their friends in high places, like me, who would soon reap our own substantial rewards.

“We needed, of course, for people to avoid asking how banks could be the special persons to whom everyone else had to turn in their gold.

“In the government founded for the *general* welfare and *common* defense—founded for and upon those things truly *indivisible* between all persons—we could hardly treat people so differently as to make one party victors and everyone else victims, allowing some persons to receive and everyone else to pay, without having to be terribly clever in pulling it off.

“\$10,000 penalties and ten-year jail terms made sure few people would dare ever ask *The Question That Cannot Be Asked*. We simply made the penalty very high for being so bold. We spoke harshly and carried a big stick.”

“What if someone were to argue that banks were not ‘persons?’” asked Crucible, playing the Devil’s advocate.

“Now, that is the one question we really couldn’t afford for people to ask,” Holiday answered.

“The only thing more dangerous to our plan, than people asserting that ‘banks’ *were* ‘persons’ also, was for people to argue that banks were *not* ‘persons.’

“Given the situation, reasonable people would have to argue that banks were either ‘persons’ or they were not.

“But, reason was the one thing our Decree simply could not withstand. Our decree could only work if banks were somehow treated *differently* from every other person, business, or industry in existence.

“We didn’t want people to ask how banks could be exempted from the definition of ‘persons’ without an express exemption, but that ‘persons’ magically reached to all *other* people, businesses and industries, *besides* banks.

“That is because, if banks were somehow exempt from being a ‘person’ without explicit exemption, then our fear was perhaps people would realize some individuals, some partnerships, some associations, or some corporations were also not a ‘person’ for purposes of this regulation, either, *also without an express exemption*.

“The main fear there, of course, was that if there was one exception that was not expressly mentioned, then perhaps there could be others also. Like, for instance, an exception to keep a mere presidential decree from violating the Supreme Law of the Land; including its Fifth Amendment protections against depriving persons of their property without due process and just compensation.

“Such constitutional protections, of course, would mandate people could get back their gold, thereby leaving banks their paper, as the banks had contractually obligated themselves in the Great Banking Act of 1913.

“But, no one called our bluff and we made out better than all the bandits of all time, without a legal care in the world.

“And, that, my friends, was how we were able to have our cake and eat it too.

“Of course, the domestic seizure of gold was only part of the picture.

“Thus, I now need to turn over the podium to Gold Window. It was Window who cleverly withdrew gold from the international community in 1971. He really helped put the icing on the cake we were able to have and yet still eat.

“Window, you Gold-Plated Wonder, come on up here!” Holiday said enthusiastically as he motioned for G. W. to come front and center.



With that brief introduction, Gold Window made his way to the podium. Already in his prototypical pre-speech stance—his hands raised over his gilded wood frame with his fingers offering their double “peace sign” message, he began his speech with his infamous “I am not a Crook” sound bite.

G.W. must have been feeling particularly honest that day, for he added a brief legalistic addendum, “...at least when compared with later politicians.”

Window wanted so much to be remembered for his feel-good accomplishments rather than his discovered misdeeds surrounding his re-election campaign, even as he relished in his dastardly deeds.

Continuing with his speech, Window lowered his arms and said, “My lasting contribution came after my predecessor—The Composite King—ingeniously substituted copper and nickel for silver in our remaining precious metal coins in 1965. But, I have to hand it to Old Two Face—after all, who could forget how he ended his speech where he proudly announced clad coins, when he said, ‘We are going to keep our opponents behind bars or grind them into the ground?’

“But, even after his Graft Society’s ‘War on Property,’ foreign governments and their central banks were still able to request gold from our government, since gold backed our U.S. Government bonds.

“In 1971, I was finally able to leave my own indelible mark in the history books. I temporarily ‘closed the gold window’ to foreign governments, thereafter preventing them from redeeming their investments in U.S. Government bonds for our gold that they were rightfully due. The last link of the dollar to gold was therefore now severed, allowing gold to ‘float’ in value on the market while dollars could now be printed without resistance.

“The government could now borrow large numbers of dollars with ease, while the biggest domestic banks who yet owned gold certificates could now watch those gold-denominated assets soar.

“And, my oh my, have those assets soared; today, one ounce of gold is worth some 1,300 paper dollars, not the measly \$20.67 each ounce had been worth since 1837.

“But, to understand the implications involved, we need to go back and look at Holiday’s 1933 and 1934 actions dealing with gold.

“In 1933, the public, incorrectly believing they were ‘persons’ with a legal obligation to turn in their gold coins, gold bullion, and gold certificates to one of our banks, were ‘paid’ in paper dollars no longer redeemable for gold.

“Well, the next year, under the Gold Reserve Act of 1934, the banks turned over to the Government Treasury all the physical gold coin and gold bullion they had earlier collected, but *kept* all the gold certificates the public had ‘given’ them.

“The Government then paid the banks for all the collected gold coin and gold bullion in new gold certificates, those same certificates that all ‘persons’ were supposedly already prohibited from owning.

“While the government ultimately got all the physical gold, all they really had at that point was the legal responsibility to safe-keep it at government expense, because all those gold certificates held by banks were really the pink-slip ownership titles to all the physical gold now stored by government.

“But, the 1934 Act also allowed the creation of a new dollar, not the one with its historic value since 1837 at \$20.67 per ounce of gold, but a new one. President Roosevelt declared the next day to be valued at \$35.00 per ounce of gold.

“Well, with that new dollar, at \$35.00 dollars/ounce, the Government was able to share in the windfall from the confiscation of gold, as all those old gold certificates held by banks suddenly held claim to far *less* physical amounts of gold.

“All the gold that the banks’ gold certificates couldn’t reach now belonged to the Government; its take in the heist ultimately amounting to some 40% of the original.

“That is the story of how the biggest banks and the Government were able to share in the greatest gold heist ever perpetrated in human history, perhaps amounting to greater financial worth than all the robberies ever before perpetrated upon man.

“Well, during my presidential term, I was finally able to offer my own significant contribution, by letting government debt mushroom into unbelievable amounts of rolled-over interest.

“*After* I ‘closed the gold window’ in 1971, in 1972, I officially set the dollar, for express purposes of the Gold Reserve Act of 1934, at \$38.00/ounce of gold, changing the rate to \$42.22 in 1973, where it is *still* valued today on government books.

“While these later changes are not as significant as the 1934 devaluation, nevertheless they affirmed—forty years later, no less—that our Favored Friends of Finance could *still* redeem their gold certificates in pure gold (now where every \$42.22 of government debt was worth one full ounce).

“Severing the dollar from a direct tie to gold—for everyone but our favored bankers—was a brilliant way to grow government debt to unfathomable heights in short order; debt owed, by and large, to our Favored Friends of Finance.

“If anyone else today owns matured government bonds worth \$1,300, they can cash them out and then go out on the private market and buy *one* ounce of gold at the current market rate.

“But, if one of our Favored Friends owns \$1,300 worth of gold certificates, they hold claim to 30 ounces of government gold! How’s that for rewarding our friends that keep us in power, a thirty-fold increase in their money, as compared with everyone else?

“Any chart that tracks government debt shows a marked spike in and after 1971, when the dollar was severed from its final tie to gold, at least for everyone but our most-favored bankers owning gold certificates, where the Government is still legally obligated to redeem in gold.

“Remember, when I closed the gold window, I specifically closed it only ‘temporarily,’ meaning at some point this ‘temporary’ condition will end, certainly at least for the privileged banks who historically receive preferential treatment beyond all others.

“And, we may even succeed in giving the biggest banks a full ounce of gold for every \$42.22 of any type of government debt they own, the political feat toward which we strive. This explains why government creditors aren’t particularly worried about their debtor becoming so terribly indebted. In fact, government creditors *encourage* government to rack up never-ending debt, by any and every means possible; from extravagant foreign aid to deadly foreign wars, from lavish public works projects to generous entitlements, from ridiculous research grants to calls for socialized health care for all.

“These creditors aren’t expecting repayment in dollars where every 1,300 or more of them bring them only one ounce of gold, but where every 1,300 bring them some *thirty* ounces of gold!

“Banks continue to lend boatloads of money to a debtor who has nowhere near enough gold to pay those debts, because the higher gold escalates in price on the so-called ‘Free Market,’ the greater will the creditors reach at the Final Day of Judgment.

“Do you want to own a national monument or any of the 643 million acres of public lands? How about a tank, fighter jet, frigate, or perhaps even an aircraft carrier? Well, someday you can, at least if you have the right political connections and are among the Government’s best-secured creditors, when default rears its ugly head.

“And, on the fateful day of reckoning when the country’s most cherished assets are divvied up, everyone from every point along the entire political spectrum will finally be calling for a massive overhaul of government. If things get bad enough, which is our end goal, there will be widespread calls—even from the most conservative of groups—for a spectacular scrapping of the once-beloved U.S. Constitution, demanding instead ‘something that works.’

“Widespread calls from every voice to modify the Constitution will be our triumphant signal to grab hold of *lasting* power, power incapable of ever being taken from us again. Undoubtedly, we will have to make some major concessions to make it appear to our adversaries that they will finally get something positive out of the process, too. But, we’ve had two centuries to stack the deck to our decided advantage. So, we can well afford a little ‘give and take’ at that time to get what we’ve always wanted—*lasting power*.

“We are more than happy to concede some of our current power, because we know just how precarious is our present hold on it, even as our opponents have absolutely no clue whatsoever.

“We have been operating within an unknown loophole within their beloved Constitution. Thankfully, none of our opponents understand the loophole, for if they did, we would be out of power overnight, with nothing to show for our centuries of hard work.

“If our opponents understood the constitutional loophole we exploit, 99% of big government would end in a heartbeat and we’d be thrown out on our bums, perhaps even landing in prison with our ill-gotten gains confiscated for the constructive fraud we have long committed.

“This country was the least-likely country in the history of the world for us to gain such incredible amounts of power as we now hold, but thankfully our adversaries don’t have the slightest clue how we ever succeeded, so successful have we been at hiding the true source of our present power.

“Toward that end, we must protect the Government capable of bestowing special favors upon our Favored Friends for mutual benefit, to keep us in power and them living in luxury wholly unparalleled in all of recorded history.

“We will continue to use strong central government as it was meant to be used; we must oppress; we must divide; we must conquer; we must preserve our privileged way of life; we dare not allow effective resistance to our absolute rule.

“As we continue to act today as we have in our past, Holiday and I are going to plant a few moles to keep tabs on the upcoming precious metals convention. It is best to keep the identity of these moles hidden, so we’re not going to disclose their names, but we are taking all appropriate precautions to be kept fully informed.

“We are masters of deception, but deception necessitates gathering accurate intelligence. Thankfully, since paper currency may be issued at very little direct cost, we can afford to pay far more than the historic betrayal price of 30 pieces of silver.

“Rest assured, we will use the money we create out of thin air to protect this beneficial system at all costs. Our Golden Goose will continue to lay its golden eggs for us for decades and centuries to come.”

Chapter Six

With silver coin, mining and minting equipment, and precious metals jewelry all agreeing in principle to join forces with gold coin to fight paper currency that had papered the world in debt, the first-ever joint convention was set. Three weeks were set aside to air important matters of concern and a fourth week was allowed to bring it all together and develop the proper strategy for moving forward.

The event was held at Independence Hall in the City of Brotherly Love, in honor of the Hall's hallowed role as the birthplace of both the Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution, the latter with its blessed words that empowered Congress "To coin Money, regulate the value thereof, and of foreign Coin, and fix a Standard of Weights and Measures."

The Convention, like most coinage activities, occurred late at night, after the hall was locked up to human entry. For added precaution against human interference, the convention was held upstairs, in the Committee of Assembly Chamber.

And, just like the jewelry convention, the security crew took the precaution of setting the human-monitored security cameras to run a continuous loop of prerecorded video.

Coin Press was named the Master of Ceremonies of the joint convention, nominated by his friend, Dredge, who gave him a stirring letter of recommendation. C.P. was quite flattered his young friend thought so highly of him.

George, for his valiant efforts in pulling together the historic convention, was given one of the most prestigious seats in the house. He was seated opposite the center aisle from Cappy and Flo, the two primary speakers of the Convention and the most-honored of all coins in attendance.

Seated next to George was Mac and adjacent to him was Torch, who was seldom away from Mac's side any time he wasn't on duty.

In fact, so close had those two coins become that Mac was going to later pop “The Question” to Torch, tying their future together with the one being developed for all precious metal coins.

Mac had his silk engagement ribbon to give to Torch, for tying her hair in a bun, the historic symbol for female coins taken off the market through marriage. Some coins preferred the custom of covering their heads with hats, such as the liberty cap worn by the widow Cappy, who was still married in her heart.

Given the convention was originally called by gold, Cappy was allowed to proceed first.

Cappy began with an introduction to the original Coinage Act of 1792. She conceded the first coinage act clearly established the country upon a silver coin standard along with a gold coin equivalency, effectively creating a bi-metallic monetary standard.

This startling fact—of the dollar unit being defined as a coin of silver with the gold coins being defined in terms of “eagles” but given a dollar-equivalency—caught some of the audience off-guard. Nevertheless, early coinage history helped set the tone for mutual cooperation from the more expensive precious metal that tended to look down on the greyish metal as an inferior product.

Cappy continued, “Anyone who studies this first coinage act will find strict consistency of coins precisely-regulated in accordance with the mandate ‘To coin Money, and regulate the Value thereof’ and the establishment of a monetary Standard of Value, according to the mandate ‘to fix a Standard of Weights and Measures.’

“Coins of silver smaller than one ‘dollar’ and coins of gold smaller than one ‘eagle’ were regulated in their value as determined by their precise weights of properly-pure metal, according to the principle of value dependent upon proportional weight and purity.”

Throughout the Convention, a full measure of respect was given to all the many speakers, but it was Flo, the 1794 silver dollar, who

stole the show. She admitted that being widely viewed as a material second-rate to gold simply pushed her harder and farther.

As the flowing hair over her shoulders symbolized, Flo had never married; her push for knowledge surpassed even her natural wifely and maternal drives. Two hundred years of pushing, she admitted, helped refine her knowledge beyond any thoughts she could have initially conceived.

She did not mention it, but her prolonged search for truth gave her invaluable insights for charting the future course for all coins.

Flo admitted she was never bamboozled by the 1871 supreme Court ruling, which first upheld paper currency as legal tender, because as a child, she had studied every word of the Treasury Secretary's 1791 opinion on the constitutionality of the first national bank, Shack.

Shack had been an imposing figure in his day, she admitted. She described him today at his advanced age of 223 years as a "veritable marble fortress." His grand portico consisted, she informed her listeners, of seven marble steps rising to an elevated base upon which stood six, mighty, 36-foot-high, fluted marble columns supporting a massive eagle-portraying pediment.

An array of corresponding pilasters lined Shack's face, Flo continued, flanking thirteen otherwise-paired windows, the odd window out found in the center of the building, over a pair of raised-panel mahogany entry doors.

Shack was crowned with balustrade handrailing standing 50 feet in the air, at the base of a standing-seam copper roof that pitched toward the heavens above, with brick chimneys flanking his opposing shoulders.

Although Shack had been chartered before she was coined, Flo told her audience, she was old enough to witness the failed attempt to extend his original 20-year charter in 1811.

Since the re-charter efforts failed, Flo admitted she didn't think much more on the matter, at least until Shed, the second bank, was chartered for a 20-year term following the War of 1812.

With the second bank marking a dangerous trend, Flo went back and read everything she could about Shack, she said, to learn what to expect from Shed.

Flo relayed that she studied intently the first banking bill, because it had caused the first significant constitutional controversy, where the first charges of "unconstitutional" government behavior were ever widely asserted.

Leading the charge against the 1791 bank bill were both the first Secretary of State and the Attorney General, both prominent and learned men, she asserted, who knew the Constitution well.

But, as Flo would show, in his 1791 response to their writings, the first Secretary of the Treasury proved to his able colleagues how the proposed bill would not actually violate every single clause in the Constitution, as they had wrongly, even if understandably, alleged.

Flo told her listeners, "You cannot assert something is 'unconstitutional' until you check *every* clause, even when one clause is otherwise the single, glaring exception to all the normal rules.

"For the 227 years that followed, proponents of limited government have all tragically ignored this special exception to all the normal rules of the Constitution, thus explaining two centuries of continued human failure either to contain or eliminate escalating federal tyranny.

"To understand how something that appears impossible under the Constitution is allowed, one cannot afford to ignore a little-known loophole, just because—due to matters of geography—it doesn't initially seem to apply. Indeed, that is precisely the reason for its long success, *because it appears wholly innocuous and utterly impotent*. The fact of the matter is it is completely the reverse; it is wholly dangerous and without precedence in its importance and power.

“And, that is what the Secretary of the Treasury otherwise informed careful readers of his 1791 bank opinion, at least when all the irrelevant filler added to confuse the only relevant issue is ignored and one learns to read between the lines.

“Before discussing this matter further, however, we need to take a break, to rest our minds. I don’t want you to overheat and melt. After all, I’ve had over 200 years to process this information; you shouldn’t expect to learn it in one hour.

“I would now like to turn our temporary stage over to Pick, Shovel, Rocker Box, and Pan, who will humor us with a brief skit.”

Pick hopped across the temporary stage on his sharp metal point, mimicking his life-long work, loosening stubborn dirt and rock to allow Shovel to scoop it up and place it in Rocker Box, who would sift the dry earth in hopes of finding a few small flakes of gold, or perhaps even a nugget or two.

But, Pick and Shovel’s work was arduous and back-breaking, often yielding little direct result. Panning for gold in a small river or stream bed in gold country was far easier, while often yielding decent results.

Pan offered the first of the escalating attacks, saying, “Your effort, Pick, rests on being all brawn but little brain.”

Pick’s response “Oh, really? What’s it to you?” helped prove Pan’s point, but the resultant turmoil hardly proved advantageous to either side.

As Pan continued in his disparaging remarks, Pick upped the ante, saying, “If you don’t close your trap, I’ll puncture you.”

“If you spear me,” Pan replied, “I’ll wrap myself around your point and broaden it so you won’t be able to keep digging.”

As the feud escalated, the quest to discover more gold by either method ceased.

Each side was so busy carrying out their debilitating plans against the other that gold production ceased. While each had the power to harm the other, continued confrontation ultimately cost both parties any hope of prosperity.

The skit ended with each side being impoverished. It was designed to ridicule the historic gold and silver feud that resulted from concentrating on minor differences, instead of working together to fulfill similar goals. This lack of cooperation yielded significant dangers.

Dredge took the stage and relayed the message that it is more productive if each unique character concentrated on what he or she could individually bring toward a team effort to raise the standard of living to every productive individual.

“Market-based economies relying upon sound money are the best means ever devised for raising the tide to lift all boats,” Dredge said, modifying slightly the slogan popularized by the 35th human President.

Dredge re-introduced Flo, who jumped back in where she had left off, discussing the Treasury Secretary’s all-important 1791 opinion on Shack’s constitutionality.

Flo informed her audience that this 1791 opinion was the only government document she had ever found that detailed, at least to the careful reader, the all-important mechanism of how even the most tyrannical of government actions may be allowed in The Land of Limited Government.

“The Secretary of the Treasury, in his most important admission, informed his readers that government could surely erect a corporation for the Government Seat, yet he pointed out both his able opponents denied the government could *ever* charter a corporation,” Flo said.

“The Treasury Secretary next detailed that under their enumerated power for the Federal Seat, members of Congress could actually exercise ‘exclusive’ legislation ‘in all Cases whatsoever.’ In other words, the Secretary of the Treasury said, government may in those places ‘do all that any government whatsoever may do,’ for ‘language does not afford a more complete designation of sovereign power than in those comprehensive terms.’

“This powerful admission shows even though members of Congress have no express power to charter a government corporation for the whole country—as both sides readily admitted—members of Congress do have the enumerated power to exercise exclusive legislation ‘in all Cases whatsoever’ for the Government Seat, a power that easily extends to the charter of a corporation *in that place*.

“Thus, with that crucial admission of a special power for a special place—of members of Congress being able to act ‘in all Cases whatsoever’ under the power for the District Seat—one must realize the Constitution authorizes government servants *to here act as political masters* in nearly any case they desire, with an amount of discretion unparalleled over all the Earth, including even greater than the most-powerful of tin-pot dictatorships of any Third-World country.

“The two different forms of government allowed by the Constitution—limited government for the whole Union, but nearly unlimited government for the District Seat—are as different as the night is from the day. One was the government most restricted on earth, the other, the most powerful. After all, only one clause speaks of the latter’s power, and it specifically declares members of Congress may act ‘in all Cases whatsoever’ *without further limitation*.

“Indeed,” Flo continued, “members of Congress may in the Government Seat exercise local powers as elsewhere would a State legislature, but they operate with none of the parameters State Constitutions place upon State legislatures.

“The federal District Seat was created out of a State, so the ‘District’ is not a ‘State.’

“Thus, neither do the constitutional prohibitions upon ‘States’ that are found in the U.S. Constitution apply to the District Seat, *including* the express prohibitions against States making anything besides gold and silver coin a tender in the payment of debts.”

Flo continued, although she worried she was losing her audience as the discussion needed to cover the important information would take much longer to comprehend than most could follow. But, it was important to keep pressing on to uncover the actual means used to enable all-powerful government.

“There are a few things of pressing importance people and coin must realize,” Flo said. “The single most important matter for understanding how federal tyranny ever gained a foothold in the Land of the Free is to realize that States may transfer governing power over to the Federal Government even *beyond* the initial ratification and later-used amendment processes, discussed in Articles VII and V, respectfully.

“In normal circumstances—for the exercise of powers throughout the whole Union—it is true, States may *collectively* grant powers to the United States only by first ratifying the U.S. Constitution and then later only by ratifying amendments.

“But, each State—*acting wholly on its own accord*—however, may also *individually* transfer all of its *remaining* governing power *over specific parcels of ground* to Congress for special purposes—for one federal seat of the Union and for numerous forts, magazines, arsenals, dock-yards and other needful buildings scattered throughout the States, under Article I (Section 8, Clause 17).

“When trying to understand federal actions essentially unlimited in power, one cannot ignore the specific grant of *essentially unlimited* powers to the U.S. Government *by an individual State* (for specific purposes) but then later assert the Federal Government is exercising a power that was never delegated to it!

“This exclusive legislative power ceded by *individual* States is transferred in conformance with the U.S. Constitution, but actually

apart from it, under the State's *own* authority. When a single State willingly gives up the *remainder* of its residual powers over a specific tract of land for authorized federal purposes, the local powers the State formerly exercised in that area will *thereafter* be exercised by Congress.

“However, the State Constitution itself cannot follow ceded lands since those lands are no longer part of the State—thus, members of Congress may exercise even greater powers than the State legislature had previously exercised (because none of the limitations of the former State Constitution any longer apply, nor do the express limitations the U.S. Constitution imposes upon ‘States’ apply).

“Thus, seemingly extra-constitutional powers that members of Congress may exercise under this power are actually within their *allowed* powers, since one clause of the U.S. Constitution specifically allows this wholly-unique practice. Of course, important geographical limitations are supposed to apply, *but that is actually another matter entirely*, wholly apart from the assertion that the Federal Government may *never* exercise such powers.”

Flo used the remainder of her allotted time to provide further historical context, so the audience could learn how one unique clause was cleverly exploited beyond its otherwise-limited geographical boundaries.

While most members of the audience were having great difficulty following the information, Flo informed them they didn't need to understand all the ramifications the first time they heard it, only to keep at it until they did.

Flo had three curtain calls from an audience who refused to let her go, until she finally promised to write a series of books documenting the whole sordid affair in intricate detail for anyone desiring more information.

After the audience finally quieted, C.P. took a few minutes to recap some of Flo's most important points before being interrupted by Tick.

“Excuse me C.P., but as Keeper of the Time, it is my duty to inform you we have only 15 minutes left before we are to be released for evening festivities,” Tick said.

“I wish to clarify we actually have only 14 minutes and 10 seconds left,” said Tock, a late-model, high-end wristwatch widely acclaimed for his accuracy.

“I stand corrected,” Tick said, not really caring for overly-presumptuous accuracy beyond the needs of the moment.

“With the clock ticking down, I will attempt to sum up today’s events in short order,” C.P. answered.

“Flo has shown us that all is not as it first appears in the world of omnipotent government; at least by the government charted to protect the unalienable rights of man given him by his Creator.

“Therefore, we must carefully examine precedent-setting court cases and government actions that appear to exceed stated authority.

“It simply isn’t enough to assert government is acting ‘unconstitutionally’—it is incumbent upon limited government proponents to discover the unique set of circumstances where the action in question *may actually be allowed*. If we can find a *single* instance where the Constitution doesn’t truly prohibit the action in question—even if power is being exercised only under authority for a special geographic location no longer part of any State—then we may finally begin to understand what has long appeared impregnable.

“We must first learn to disarm the false cloak of invincibility surrounding excessive government action. We must clearly differentiate between the government’s *never* being able to do something versus a government only being able to do a particular thing under a particular power for particular places in special and wholly unique circumstances.

“We are dealing with clever and brilliant ‘magicians’ who want us to believe they have the awe-inspiring power to change the meaning of words so a written Constitution can no longer limit their power.

“But, we must see through such deception; we must look past their lies; we must expose them as the frauds they are. We must learn to make sense out of all the apparent nonsense that is going on around us on a daily basis.

“Those who are delegated federal authority are powerless to change their own authority, as only States are empowered to amend the Constitution. No federal official or member of Congress may ever change the powers they are allowed to exercise for the whole Union. No federal official or member of Congress may ever change the meaning of the Constitution that created their legislative seat or government office and gave them their power, even judges.

“After all, it must be specifically stated that nothing in the Constitution prevents federal officials or members of Congress from using the *same* words and phrases found in the Constitution also in the District of Columbia, but then defining those words for the District Seat *in a wholly unique fashion!* Do not jump to false conclusions that their unique meanings for the District have anything to do with those words’ meanings for the whole Union.

“We must hold on to primary principles and look carefully at the single exception to all the normal rules. Do not allow your opponents to confuse the only real issue that comes into play, for that is how they win. You cannot allow your opponents to frame the issue, or you will become lost in their incomprehensible nonsense.

“Do not expect those who imply they may change their own powers by changing the meaning of words to admit that they may only do so in the Federal Seat.

“In 1791, the first Treasury Secretary, with the greatest care, admitted what he was doing, even as he buried it within his lengthy response, because he needed to get the ball rolling in his intended direction.

“But, do not expect later advocates to ever admit they follow his lead, even though they must, for that is the *only* path they may use to vary from the otherwise-inviolable commands of the Constitution.

“Indeed, the supreme Court, in establishing Judicial Review in an 1803 case, really only established the Court being the final arbiter on District Seat matters. After all, the Court examined the case involving the commission of a Justice of the Peace, *for the District of Columbia*.

“But, matters for the District Seat have nothing to do with what may be done for the whole country. And, who is to say that the Judges weren’t right—that the supreme Court has the final say in matters of federal concern for the District Seat? After all, the District Seat was created precisely to *keep the States* from having *any* say there (so, even though the States remain the ‘principals’ to the Constitution for matters of the whole Union, the States are not intended to have any say in the District Seat).

“Indeed, in the District Seat, there is not even any such thing as legislative representation—the fundamental building block of the Union. No resident of the District has any representation in Congress; thus, in the District Seat, it is of no matter of concern that unelected bureaucrats under the Executive Branch of government enact regulations held as law. Do not confuse the two Forms of Government allowed by the Constitution—our Constitution Republic for the Union versus absolute tyranny for the District Seat.

“Thank you for listening to today’s presentations. We will continue our main series of presentations at 10:00 p.m. sharp, some 20 hours from now, when Tock will take his turn at opening the meeting,” C.P. said, as he dismissed the group. “And, as you should realize by now, Tock is quite punctual, so please take it easy at our after-hours festivities and be here on time when we start up again after a day of rest. I promise another session for the history books.

“I will now excuse you all to adjourn to the adjacent Long Gallery, where we will eat dinner and enjoy a few festivities.”

Chapter Seven

The dinner of gold leaf flakes and colloidal silver helped attendees replace any metals that may have sloughed off during recent interactions with the abrasive world around them.

The dinner entertainment proved to be a welcome relief from the intensity of the earlier meeting as brass instruments offered their support for the precious metals in a most melodious manner.

Mac found the time sufficiently romantic to ask Torch to be his bride. She immediately answered, “Yes!”

Flame and Nikki were the first to congratulate the couple.

Two brief presentations were scheduled after dinner; the first by Trader Jill, an 1874 Trade Dollar.

Several of the lesser-known coins who helped plan the convention and knew Jill, were surprised she had asked to speak. They didn’t even think she would want to attend, let alone stand before the whole convention and talk. After a short discussion, Jill’s adversaries agreed to let her speak after dinner. One of them snidely commented that “after dinner” was when she was known to do her best work.

Although some were worried what she would say, in the spirit of the unprecedented cooperation, knowing every side needed to be able to speak, everyone agreed to her presentation without qualm. After all, if the historic convention sought to stifle the airing of any dirty laundry, such prejudicial actions would endanger the explicit purpose of the convention in moving past historical biases to work together for mutual benefit.

Jill was a painted lady; not only were her weight and fineness both tattooed on her posterior—“420 grains” silver of “900 fineness”— she also had accumulated various chop-marks placed there by numerous foreign merchants who examined her weight and fineness and found her “worthy,” leaving their marketplace brands on her back attesting to the fact.

Jill wore her tattoos, brandings, and piercings with the honor of a decorated soldier, even if she was typically viewed at home as but a foreign mercenary, called “Traitor Jill” by her most-vocal adversaries.

Those who didn’t understand foreign piercing practices thought Jill’s chop marks signified she had been a slave, a particularly disobedient slave at that, being punished often.

Of course, had Jill been a slave, she would have been disobedient. After all, what freedom-loving soul could ever be an *obedient* slave?

Domestic coins of silver long felt betrayed by her, nominally one of their own. She was originally struck for trade in the Far East, which, before Jill, preferentially traded in foreign coin. Domestic companies trading overseas had always paid a premium in standard silver dollars, being of slightly lighter weight and therefore less-readily accepted overseas than the dollar’s foreign competitors, especially the Spanish Pillar Dollar.

In her earliest days, Jill believed many of the lies told about her, because she heard it so often and from so many quarters, quarters both figurative and literal.

But, with the betrayal, first of gold in 1933 and then silver in 1965, Jill slowly came to believe she perhaps had something unique to offer after all. With decades of this revised belief now under her belt, Jill had developed a fiercely independent mindset, caring little of what the “fine folk” thought of her any more.

And, tonight, at the convention, she would finally be able to share her unique market perspective with her former domestic adversaries who perhaps would scoff at her no more. Even if this didn’t prove to be the case, however, she would finally (and without interruption) be able to get off her chest words she had long wished to voice.

“I was originally struck as a market coin to compete overseas with foreign competition,” Jill said, as she began to let her opponents know she now stood firmly upon her convictions. “Although I had a

legal tender value of one dollar in all individual domestic transactions of five dollars or less, my native legal tender status was really quite irrelevant in the foreign markets I served.

“As my legal tender status of ‘one dollar’ carried no legal weight in foreign lands, my tattoo showing me to be of 420 grains of silver of 900 fineness—of 900 parts silver out of every 1,000 parts—was my primary claim to fame.

“Being known primarily by weight and fineness, I can almost be considered a predecessor to today’s bullion coin, like the young Torch and other modern gold bullion coins sitting in front of me tonight, and not wholly unlike modern, one-ounce silver eagle bullion coins also now struck by the Mint.

“But, back in my prime, I was alone in my battles and I had to find my purpose all by myself without any help from anyone in attendance tonight. And, if some of you sitting here before me begin to squirm because of your past treatment of me, you should know your unpleasant attitudes only made me a stronger coin in the end. It is therefore I who should thank you.

“I am made of the same purity of silver as the rest of silver coins struck since 1837. In fact, I have even greater weight than the venerable silver dollar established in 1792. Therefore, I am worth more by comparison and no one should be excessively punished for giving too much value.

“But, I readily admit I caused a fair amount of domestic confusion by being of a slightly greater weight but at the same legal value as the silver dollars of old. It was wrong of me to break the precious rule of value dependent upon proportional weight.

“I apologize for any confusion I may have caused; it was never my intention to cause domestic harm. If I could go back and correct the mistake of also having a domestic legal tender value, I would. But, I cannot turn back the Hand of Time. I don’t think even Tick or Tock can do that.

“Instead, I am here to inform you of the conclusions I have formed over the many decades of my life, so I can help make the world a better place for all gold and silver coins for centuries to come.

“Arrogant government coinage and printing presses over time came to believe their own fairytales, accepting as an unquestioned fact that they could make things with little or no inherent value a legal tender at great value, without ill effect.

“Government officials improperly separated ‘value’ from ‘weight’—they retained stated ‘value’ but discarded true ‘weight.’ In other words, they callously discarded gold and silver while alleging the coin’s former value remained behind in base metal coins without any precious metals in them. They even said paper currency—without redemption in precious metal coin—also had direct legal value, a crock beyond all credible belief for our Constitutional Republic.

“Well, if corrupt government officials seek to separate value from weight, then the free market should do the opposite and now separate weight from value—the market should retain weight and give up on legally-imposed (arbitrary) value.

“Instead of creating a random term for value—such as one ‘dollar,’ and then defining it, since 1837, as 412.5 grains of silver of .900-fineness—if government cannot be induced to honor its proper financial duties, then the free market should designate an amount of weight of silver or gold and let those weights serve as the unit of value for that metal, directly.

“In this day of great productive capability, with an explosion of productive capacity, I assert one, small ‘grain’ of pure gold is the proper unit in the measurement of value for all private market dealings with gold.

“Modern bullion Eagle coins struck since 1986 by the Government Mint in one-ounce, half-ounce, quarter-ounce, and tenth-ounce increments should never be valued in the disproportional ‘dollar’ figures shown on their posteriors, such as

Torch at an historically-unsupportable \$10 value (a value properly held by Feather at nearly twice her weight). Instead, they should be valued at their market rate *determined by their weight*, such as Torch at her 120 ‘grains’ of pure gold—one-quarter of a troy ounce.

“One-ounce gold coins would be valued in the market at the 480 ‘grains’ of gold (which is the one ounce troy), the ‘grain’ being the smallest ordinary unit of weight. Half-ounce gold coins would have the value of 240 ‘grains’ and tenth-ounce coins at 48 ‘grains.’

“Conversely, a ‘pennyweight’ of pure silver—that is, every 24 grains of silver (every $1/20^{\text{th}}$ of a troy ounce)—should be the proper unit in the measurement of value for dealings with silver, whose value is not as great as gold and thus its common unit of useful measure should be a factor of weight larger.

“Since the ‘dollar’ is a term intentionally muddled today from its true meaning, unless or until the Government brings back the silver or gold dollar, the latter being (since 1837) 25.8 grains of gold .900-fineness—23.22 grains of pure gold—the free market should begin using a ‘grain’ of pure gold as the unit for trade.

“The free market should not be afraid of using a market coin different from the country’s legal unit. After all, when this great country won her independence, every State of the Union still used a money of account denominated in pounds, shillings and pence. At that time, the ‘dollar’ was simply a market coin of foreign origin without legal sanction anywhere in all the Union.

“Even worse, the thirteen States then forming the Union each used one of five different units of account, all named similarly, but each standard containing differing amounts of silver.

“But, the dollar coin, being foreign to every State, represented the same amount of silver in every State. Eventually, the uniform ‘dollar’ trumped all the legal standards, which needed complicated exchange rates for trade between them when trading between States with differing benchmarks. In 1792, the dollar officially and without question became the new federal standard, trumping all others.

“Today, with similar confusion, since the paper dollar has no fixed value or defined meaning, the paper dollar can also fall to a new standard unit of uniform and known value, one grain of pure gold.

“Of course, the recommended changes of which I speak will take a great amount of work to bring about. And, thus, I get now to the main point of my speech.

“To do all this essential work, we coin of silver and gold need to get out of our stifling plastic enclosures and out of our fanciful boxed sets, foregoing the gloved hands of a few careful collectors, and get ourselves out again into the dirty, grimy hands of the general public!”

The audience’s collective jaws dropped at the audacity of an unknown and seemingly unimportant coin to so boldly crush the presumptive ideal towards which the whole community of coin had been silently drawn for generations.

The daring mindset of Jill, wholly discounting the growing momentum of coins, seeking adoration and adulation instead of being content with life as a useful financial tool, shocked the audience to its core.

The effect of Jill’s radical comment was as if a surgeon’s scalpel had miraculously exposed a malignant tumor strangling the life out of its host, even though the tumor had mistakenly been viewed as the Fountain of Youth.

Jill continued, “Freedom may be decidedly messy, but it is far better than the enslavement offered by the sterile hands of captivity!”

The members of the audience most capable of independent thought broke out into a spontaneous round of applause, but Jill was not yet finished.

“I applaud the bold choice of both Flo and Cappy to remain *au natural*, foregoing both plastic encasement and metallic surgery, choosing instead to live life to its fullness and in honor of their original purpose.

“But, the stuffed-shirt coins of gold and silver who mount their proof pedigrees and authenticities of rarity on their walls, so everyone can view their supposed superiority over common coins of gold and silver, can have their pedigrees and plastic encasement. I, for one, will accept absolutely no substitute for FREEDOM!

More listeners came to life, with increasing rounds of applause, hoots, and hollering.

“I am a coin of silver and never has a plastic shroud touched my body. I promise with every grain of silver in my soul that I will fight plastic encasement unto my death!

“I will never say to another, ‘Give me Liberty or Give me Death,’ because my liberty is not for any other person or coin to give.

“Neither may others rightfully end my life, so I will fight with every fiber of my body to prevent any paper currency or base metal coin from ever taking it.

“Therefore, it is not ‘Give me Liberty or Give me Death.’ No, it is ‘Allow me my Liberty or PREPARE TO DIE!’”

The audience, not exactly used to such militant talk, didn’t know what to think at first, although Norse provided them with a strong clue as he hollered out in fervent support of Jill’s boldness and determination.

“Our fight is therefore not really against paper currency and base metals. Our fight is first and foremost against *any precious metal coin who purposefully denies his or her own existence!* Our fight is against the precious metal coin who rejects his or her own unique qualities that have faithfully served us and mankind for thousands of years,” Jill said before coming to a conclusion.

“We are precious metals, *gold-durnit*, not plastic!

“It is time to learn to act like precious metals again and to live life to its fullest! Get out of your plastic shells now, before they choke the life out of you.”

Shaking nervously, but with every grain of her being, Jill lowered her voice and stared straight into the eyes of several coins in the audience still sporting coats of plastic, and in a carefully-measured voice, said clearly, “Get out of your plastic shells now, *before I choke the life out of you!*”

As Norse heard those words, he realized he had found his soulmate; a fellow radical who stood firmly upon her convictions and wasn’t afraid to express them, even when they had been wholly unpopular.

To Jill’s amazement, however, her views weren’t unpopular. In fact, nearly the whole audience rose to a heartfelt ovation and responded to Norse’s lead with “Hip-hip hooray! Hip, hip, hooray! Hip, hip, hooray!”

Taps blew his bugle loudly while Torch and Flame both lit bright fires, if only briefly to avoid burning down the crowded hall and melting the audience.

A small tear inadvertently streamed down Jill’s face; she was now facing a wholly-foreign emotion—joy. Never before in her life had she experienced a tear of happiness and she presently found herself unable to stop the flow.

Jill didn’t even care if everyone in the front of the dinner hall could see her tear up; the rough and tumble girl no one had ever called a lady—unless she was derisively referred to as a Lady of the Night—was actually as soft and innocent as the girl next door. Well, at least a type of softness wrapped within the toughest skin of a fierce warrior who would skin alive any coin who opposed her.

As Jill moved off the impromptu stage, out of the corner of her eye, she saw several coins sheathed in plastic sheepishly remove their simple two-piece shells.

Norse, after making his way out of the aisle, went backstage to introduce himself to the coin he vowed to get to know.

* * *

The last speaker of the night had asked for only a few minutes, and it was again decided she should be allowed to speak after dinner, preferably after many of the older and more conservative coins had already retired for bed.

C.P. was more than a little nervous about introducing his next guest; he wasn't even sure where to affix his gaze. He ultimately decided it was safest to face the audience and only glance quickly in the speaker's direction when she first entered the stage, giving her a quick nod of acknowledgment.

"Our final speaker of the night is Lady Modiva, the 1917 silver quarter-dollar. She asks only for a moment of our time, which I am happy to give her," C.P. said as he momentarily glanced in her direction, hoping his verbal cue would let the audience know to provide at least a modicum of respect to the speaker who only wore a modicum of clothing.

Lady M caused quite the stir anywhere she went. Frankly, she was a little tired of all the fuss. Thinking it was time to put things in proper perspective, she asked to speak at the event.

"I am quite used to getting a cold shoulder from my fellow coins," she said, after gently sashaying up to the microphone as the gasps and whispers began, especially among the coins seated near the front, those with the best views. The video cameras broadcasting her image on the large screens remained closely cropped to her head and shoulders, not showing lower portions of her well-proportioned body.

"I have heard my share of comments, the nicest of which state something to the effect that 'my shoulder wouldn't ever feel any coldness, if I would appropriately cover myself up.'"

Lady M wore her tunic off her right shoulder, around her elbow, exposing her bare breast to the whole world.

“I don’t know why the bare body causes such an uproar when we are all born into this world in our birthday suits. We coins are male or female in gender, light or heavy in weight, gold or silver in substance and color, frontal or in profile in our perspective, but, in the end, we all have the same body parts, even if the most conservative of coins openly show only their head and perhaps a shoulder or two while keeping everything else hidden, some even to the point of choosing to roll around on their rims.

“But, at this moment in time, I want to tell you what really makes *my* blood boil. It is when coins get indignant about my wearing my clothing off my shoulder, but who eat, sleep, work, and go about the rest of their activities without a seeming care in the world, even after gold coins were condemned to prison and melted into bars, and after silver was fully replaced in the marketplace with copper and nickel!

“My attire, or the lack thereof, is not the elephant in the room, my dear coin; the fact gold and silver coins have been thrown into the trash bin of society while paper currency rules the day should make every coin cry out in agony if you ask me!”

The crowd began applauding favorably, as the mood of the convention was increasingly turning toward such a perspective.

“I do not understand why things of pressing importance are ignored while things without much redeeming value are elevated to a national pastime,” Lady M said, continuing with her speech.

“We have suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of our enemy, but no one before now has seemed to care one bit. And, this I do not understand, not one bit.

“We must correct the errors of our errant ways before it is too late. If your clothes are keeping needed oxygen from your brain, then I say, ‘throw them off and stand naked before God and man’ as have I.

“If your indifference to our plight is caused by your own feelings of incompetence, throw yourselves to the ground, so you may test your authenticity, hearing the familiar ‘ping’ of your precious metal existence to confirm you have resounding value.

“We are precious metals; *darn-nabbit!* Wake up and learn to be counted! Learn to stand for something before you fall for anything.

“If you are shrouded in a plastic straitjacket reducing your ability to function, do yourselves a favor and discard it at your first opportunity. Do not succumb to the supposed ideal of becoming impervious to the outside world, for in doing so, you deny not only your heritage, but even your own *existence!*”

Lady Modiva ended her talk to more hooting and hollering, saying, “You are not plastic, my dear coins, so quit trying to be common, because you are special, you are *precious!*”

The audience was expecting only a pleasant dinner to top off their wonderful night of education; what they got were motivational speeches beyond compare.

Chapter Eight

While waiting for Trader Jill outside the women's restroom the following night, Norse stopped Flo, who was making her way back to her seat. "Why haven't human beings been able to figure out how their government now follows principles wholly opposite the nation's founding?" asked Norse.

"I'm not exactly sure, young Norse," Flo answered, "but, you must realize it was easier for me because I witnessed most of the changes firsthand because of my long lifespan. The only thing of real harm I missed was the 1791 Bank Charter, but I was old enough to witness the controversy surrounding its failed extension in 1811.

"It was during the debates on extending his 20-year charter when I first began sensing Shack's inherent danger, even though all my friends assured me it would be impossible for Shack's notes to ever be declared a legal tender under the Constitution.

"The great irony of humans taking gold and silver out of circulation in 1933 and 1965, respectively, meant all of us historic coin who remained behind are that much better-preserved today. Large silver coins such as you and I lose as little as one percent of our weight in 50 years of normal circulation; large gold coins about two percent.

"But, out of common circulation, even smaller gold coins such as Libby may have indefinite lifespans, even without plastic encasements straitjacketing their souls. Compare our long lives with the average lifespan of circulating paper currency, seldom beyond a few years.

"These facts give gold and silver a tremendous advantage in our fight to restore our rightful place in the market, at least once we discover the appropriate will to make it happen.

"If we can get more pedigreed gold and silver coins to throw off their plastic straitjackets that isolate them from reality, they too can join our battle to restore freedom for all gold and silver coin."

“But, few graded coins even bothered to attend our convention, even while jewelry, mining, minting, and dredging equipment showed up in droves to offer their support,” Norse said, worrying about the repercussions.

“I know,” Flo answered, a bit saddened. “It is disheartening so many gold and silver coins are choosing to keep on their blinders, instead of coming here and filling every seat in the auditorium. The truth of the matter is they feel rather comfortable in their present, dignified positions, including chairs at our storied coinage universities.

“Truth be told, freedom movements seldom begin in the Ivy League or the Halls of Justice; historically they start with only a very small segment of the population and one seemingly powerless at that, but otherwise extremely dedicated to their cause.

“Over time, even those unlikely to commit begin to sense the excitement of a seemingly-impossible goal gaining a small amount of traction, and when at some magical point in time, it suddenly appears possible. With additional effort, with ever-increasing numbers joining in the freedom fold, the impossible unexpectedly appears plausible. Momentum builds until the impossible becomes inevitable.

“And soon, a few brave souls with impractical visions of freedom were able to change history, simply because they had to try. Believing in principles of freedom strongly enough increases the likelihood they will happen, through sheer determination and steadfastness, if by no other means.”

Beginning to tire, Flo excused herself to make way to her seat, to regain her strength before the evening festivities began.

While waiting patiently for Jill, Norse was suddenly nudged by an arrogant coin trying to impress two female coins.

The coin, a foreigner, spoke only broken English. He was obviously impressed with himself. In fact, he wouldn’t shut up.

“Yes,” said the rude coin, ignoring the fact he had nudged Norse. “I was able to stay in a four-star gold depository in The First State when my master went away on a six-month vacation overseas. I was too valuable for him to leave at home, so I went to the depository and stayed in the elite, segregated storage area. I must say, it was hard to leave.”

The braggart talked at length about the impressive security measures, the layout, the diligent routines of the security staff, and the pampered service for those staying in segregated storage.

Norse couldn’t see what the ladies saw in the foreigner, as he didn’t look any too special to have even visited a depository, let alone to have ever stayed in segregated storage.

Trying to avoid eavesdropping on a conversation he didn’t care to listen to but couldn’t seem to avoid, Norse was thankful when Cuff and Link, two so-called “Mercury” dimes, finally came up to question him on his views of the convention.

Relaying his opinions to the twins, Norse admitted he was excited about the direction the convention was heading. The three coins talked until Jill made her way out of the bathroom and back to Norse, so the new couple could begin to make their way back to their seats and enjoy their first of many dates to come.

There must be something in the air, Norse thought, after next running into Chief, a 1911 quarter-eagle gold coin with a legal value of \$2.50, who was trying to impress a few female coins he had cornered.

His prey was growing increasingly uncomfortable, and were about to ask for Norse’s help when Chief suddenly saw another coin more to his liking and immediately turned towards her.

Never before had Norse met Chief, but he knew of Chief’s stoic reputation and impeccable attire, both at odds with his present demeanor and sloppy dress.

Chief's headdress was askew and slipping backwards. It looked like an uncomfortable afterthought, not an integral part of someone who had worn the crowning attire his entire adult life.

Norse thought of Mac and his well-brushed military cap worn like a tight-fitting glove. Chief's headdress, fastidiously cared for over its long life, showed recent evidence of carelessness, if not open disrespect.

As Tock opened the convention for another night of presentations at 10:00 p.m. sharp, Norse directed his attention to the front of the auditorium.

The current speakers, like the speakers before and after, gave their input on the status quo and their thoughts regarding things needing attention.

Nikki, Flame's girlfriend, was the next speaker of the convention.

As she approached the microphone, Flame whistled loudly and intensified his torch to help get the audience excited. It didn't take much encouragement for the males in the audience to start shouting and whistling, for they liked what they saw.

Nikki had the beauty and grace of a princess. Actually, that accolade didn't do her sufficient justice; she had the beauty and grace of a goddess. She wore a victor's laurel wreath as her headband, with a flowing ribbon containing the motto "In God We Trust" emblazoned thereon. She projected an air of splendor that would surely remain unaffected by the ravages of time.

Nikki, slightly embarrassed from all the attention being cast her way, began her speech, "I asked to speak tonight, because my heart weighs heavy.

"For several generations now, ever since gold stopped circulating in 1933 and started being melted into bars in 1934, remaining historic gold coins have become increasingly rare.

“No longer do historic gold coins work. And, those of us of the present generation of new coins have never even known work, real honest-to-goodness work. Sure, we are all still an excellent store of value, but no longer are any of us a circulating medium of exchange or a proper Unit of Account.

“Sadly, we gold and silver coins have become rather sedentary, not only in our actions, but also in our minds.

“I am thrilled this convention is a strong break from that growing trend.

“But, many of our brothers and sisters did not come here tonight. Far too many of them stayed home, content with being taken out of their safe domains only for the occasion of being eyed and ogled, caressed and fondled by the gloved hand of a few careful collectors who scrutinize their coins under strong magnification.

“I must say, with every bit of passion and conviction I can muster—we gold and silver coins must stop being willful participants who seek to be worshipped instead of worked. We must stop striving to become golden idols, and get back to work as monetary coin!”

The audience sat there, stunned, as Nikki’s words sunk in and reached their own consciences.

Not one coin in the audience had realized the extent of their profound vanity. Many of them *liked* their current position, being rare enough to receive the royal treatment, seldom having to lift a finger or exert any effort, wholly relieved of their once-prodigious work ethic.

The realization of their self-serving lifestyles had a profound effect upon the audience as they immediately began to revolt against such blatant narcissism. They had sought to become an end in and of themselves, instead of a helpful means to achieve nobler ends, of working diligently to improve upon the status quo.

“We precious metals have *two* primary jobs: to store *and* to transmit value,” Nikki said. “We cannot be satisfied with only the

first role any longer. We are also meant to have active circulation, which necessitates that we again serve as the monetary unit of account, the unit of measure for all things of value. Sure, it can be hard work and even lonely on occasion, but we are meant to circulate *to make the world a better place!* It is not simply about us, all the time!

“In our travels as a circulating medium of exchange, we can achieve great satisfaction knowing we help *create* value.

“Yes, we precious metal coins are blessed with the inherent ability to be able to help ‘create’ value.

“In other words, we too can be ‘creators’ here on earth, following in the gloried footsteps of our Creator who created everything. This is the role we were and are meant to fulfill and we cannot and we will not find fulfillment until we again hold true to our original purpose.

“We help make the world a better place when we serve as a store of value, the unit measure for value and an honest medium of exchange. We precious metals are the best encouragement of purposeful trade, facilitating the advancement of society along the smoothest of lines. We help put concepts into production; we allow dreams to become realities; and we shape ideas into achievable goals.

“But, we must forgo personal vanity; we must give up false pride; we must cease being objects of worship and again be willing to be the most versatile of tools of the trade, the enabler of things far and wide.”

Nikki made her point and did not seek to belabor it, even as the audience clamored for more.

“No, I have said my bit,” Nikki said, “and now it is time for me to leave the stage to allow the next coin her moment, so we can all get back to work that much sooner, *for we can only make tomorrow a better place if today we work!*”

As Nikki walked off the stage, Flame was waiting in the wings for her so he could congratulate his girlfriend on a job well-done.

* * *

Arrow was the next speaker, waddling back and forth up to the microphone at the podium near the front of the stage, unable to roll and barely able to walk.

She was a gem of a coin, in pristine condition, and encased in permanent plastic and graded MS-65 to prove it. The Mint State 1855 quarter-dollar coin showed no signs of circulation or wear and she had no discoloration or unsightly marks to detract from her prized collector value.

“Like Trader Jill, if I could go back in time, I would also like to change a few things,” Arrow said as she began her speech, her voice muffled by the thick coat of plastic. “But, I cannot.

“I wish I could say, like Jill, I gave my customers greater value than my predecessors, but again, I cannot. I am light of weight some seven percent, as compared historically with my earlier relatives and also compared to the unchanged silver dollar.

“But, let me explain matters, because things seemed more complicated at the time I was struck than they do to me now after a steady regression of sound money, for time has a manner of clarifying principles, allowing things of greater importance to stand out.

“In the 1820s, as you already know, increased production of silver worldwide drove down its price relative to gold, whose supply was more stable.

“In appropriate response, Congress in 1834 finally increased the value of gold relative to silver from the 15:1 ratio originally established in 1792, closer to 16:1 as then found in the world market.

“Well, large discoveries of gold in 1848 and 1849, in what soon became The Golden State, next lowered the value of gold relative to silver, essentially reverting back to the 15:1 ratios of 1792.

“So silver was coming back into its own again in 1850; its value was *increasing*.

“What Congress should have done in 1853 after silver coins had disappeared from circulation was to regulate the value of gold coin back to its 1792 standards, leaving alone silver coin.

“But, in 1834, Congress had made the metal increasing in value in the market—gold—more valuable at law. Thus, to the uninformed, it is perhaps not surprising that in 1853, Congress again took a small amount of the metal again raising in value—now silver—out of the smaller silver coins.

“However, they didn’t take any silver out of the ‘dollar,’ since, after all, it was the standard ‘unit’ in the measure of value, so it *shouldn’t* change. Just as it would be imprudent to change the ‘unit’ measure of length of one ‘inch’ to seven-eighths of an inch, so too the ‘dollar’ should not be changed.

“But, by taking out some seven percent of silver out of the subsidiary silver coins of a half-dollar, quarter-dollar, dime, and the old half-dime of five cents, so they would stay in circulation, but leaving alone the dollar, Congress committed *The Original Sin*, monetarily speaking. In 1853, Congress violated the fundamental rule for monetary value, of the value of coins of like metal of equal purity being directly dependent upon proportional weight.

“No longer would two half-dollars equate in the amount of silver as found in one silver dollar, nor would four quarters, ten dimes or twenty half-dimes equal the amount of pure silver in one silver dollar.

“I have tried turning a blind eye to my part in the demise of monetary silver. But, having a coin with half the value of a larger coin but containing less than half its weight is no better than using a half-pound weight on a balance scale containing but seven ounces instead of the required eight.

“In each case, the disproportionate unit of measure necessarily destroys that whole unit’s continued usefulness. It is no wonder

silver started its tragic decline, even as it should have been gaining in its respect and coming into its own again.

“Coins light of weight but of full value must accept the blame rightfully due us. The effect of this lightening of weight was no different than counterfeiting, even though the counterfeiter in this case was the Mint, following the express direction of Congress. The ill effects of counterfeiting, after all, hardly depend upon the identity of the counterfeiter. Actually, it is even worse when the counterfeiter is the Government. With Congress calling the shots, thereafter not even a single coin of original honest weight could ever slip by.

“The idea needing changing is the fixing of value between two differing metals. Fixing the relative prices between two different materials cannot be maintained other than the briefest measures of time and the simplest of markets.

“I understand the original reasoning to have two precious metal legal tenders both denominated in a single money of account—of ‘dollars’—which was to increase the supply of available money while reaching a greater spectrum of prices (silver coins for smaller purchases, gold coins for larger). Sadly, however, the inherent struggle with using *two* metals in *one* unit of account was later used to remove *both* of them from circulation!

“The inherent strife of two metals denominated in one money of account was used by clever, self-serving men to justify the substitution of paper for both gold and silver with paper.

“For my pennance, I have decided to break free from my plastic constraints, so I may again pull my own weight in the battle to restore sound money,” Arrow said, as she slowly began climbing up the tall ladder brought to center stage. Arrow intended to perform a bellyflop onto C.P., the sturdy metal coin press, who had reluctantly moved into position and hunkered down below the ladder while Arrow had been speaking.

All eyes of the audience were upon Arrow as she struggled up the ladder in her permanent plastic encasement. Each step was a grueling fight, a contest of sheer determination battling the physical constraints of the strong and inflexible plastic.

Finally, after considerable effort, Arrow stood precariously erect on the top step of the ladder—the fateful step no human being may ever stand without risking life and limb.

“You don’t have to go through with this,” C.P. said in a low voice, so no one in the audience could hear.

“Yes, I do,” Arrow answered quietly, “at least if I want to regain my dignity.”

In a voice loud enough for everyone in the audience to hear, Arrow said, “I ask the audience to commence a final countdown, so I may begin my personal quest to help restore sound money.”

“Ten, nine, eight,” the audience began. “Seven, six,” they continued.

“Five, four, three, two,” the audience spoke out, in nervous excitement. “ONE!” the audience said loudly, as Arrow stepped forward from the tall ladder and fell with grace, plummeting belly-first to what surely seemed to be a tragic death as C.P. braced for impact.

A loud “crack” echoed through the auditorium.

“Ugh!” Arrow uttered in a low voice, involuntarily, as she slowly raised herself up off C.P. Arrow’s plastic sheath, though it showed several large cracks top to bottom, still encased Arrow in a veritable straitjacket.

Once her head stopped spinning and after she had regained some of the wind that had been knocked out of her, she said to C.P., “I don’t know if I can make it back up the ladder to try again, to finish the task at hand.”

C.P. opened up his jaws and replied, “I may be too weak yet to help rid you of your encasement, but I’m willing to try. I have brought a good many coins into this world, and I will do whatever I can to help ensure one who lost her way can make it back into the fold.”

Arrow slowly crawled into C.P.’s jaws.

C.P. began to bear down on the plastic case with all his might as Dredge narrated the events for the audience.

C.P. knew from his last attempt to strike pure gold he didn’t have a great deal of strength left and he didn’t know if he could break Arrow free of her plastic encasement or if he would break in the process.

Although C.P. may try but fail, he wouldn’t fail to try. He may publicly break under the exertion put forth by every fiber of his metal body, but he wouldn’t lose his nerve.

Sweat began to form on C.P.’s arms and across his back. Soon drops were coalescing on his forehead, but Dredge asked for a towel so he could wipe away the sweat from his dear friend.

The crowd began to cheer on C.P. while Dredge tried to comfort Arrow, as she lay motionless within C.P.’s jaws. As C.P. increased the amount of pressure upon her back, she began to involuntarily moan under the mounting burden until a snapping sound could be heard throughout the auditorium.

Hoping the splintering sound wasn’t his student’s spine or his own teeth, C.P. kept going until the plastic gave way, flying off spectacularly in all directions and almost taking off Dredge’s suction hose mouth in the process.

The audience cheered as C.P. loosened his grip and Arrow emerged from his jaws, finally free of her plastic encasement.

The audience gasped when they noticed a large dent in Arrow’s side where C.P.’s molars had first broken through the plastic.

Although C.P. had backed off as soon as he understood he had completed the job, the new blemish in Arrow's heretofore unbroken appearance drew every eye in the audience to the new imperfection in an otherwise almost perfect coin.

The audience didn't know how to react, at least until Arrow said, "Undoubtedly this will not be the last wound I will suffer in this battle to restore gold and silver to their historic glory!"

The audience loved Arrow's response, this coin who had silently suffered for her role of 163 years of disrespect to silver, offering a new hope for both silver and gold. She had learned a thing or two from her mistakes, and would now get into the trenches to ensure such harmful mistakes were not repeated again in the foreseeable future.

Arrow could make no claim of infallibility, but she could learn from her mistakes and vowed to not make the same mistake twice.

* * *

The final speaker of the night was a surprise guest, such a surprise, in fact, few in the audience even knew she existed and no one beyond Cappy knew she was coming.

When Dredge whispered into C.P.'s ear who had just arrived and would serve as their final speaker for the first phase of the convention, C.P. began to shake with the nervous excitement of a young boy about to meet a superhero.

C.P., in a breaking voice, excitedly said, "I am thrilled to announce that our last speaker of this phase of the convention is a surprise guest. I hadn't thought such a coin as this was even capable of existence. It is therefore with great pleasure that I introduce Olive, the 2009 ultra-high relief double-eagle coin. Olive, show us your beauty!"

The lighting technicians didn't have a clue what was coming. The house lights remained at their normal intensity for public speakers while the stage lights were at full brightness.

The two spotlights originally illuminating C.P. swung to stage right in anticipation of illuminating the next speaker as she was set to enter from the side.

There was a small amount of movement at the side of the temporary stage as the stage hands parted the impromptu curtain to let the guest speaker through, pulling it back so as not to rub on the beautiful coin. Suddenly, an intense blinding light reflected off every square millimeter of the high polish of the voluptuous, three-dimensional, ultra high relief body of coin press perfection, Olive, who seemed to leap out of her coinage background.

The lighting technicians immediately dimmed their spotlights, but the damage had already been done to far too many old retinas. It would undoubtedly take some time for even the youngest of eyes of the audience to recuperate from looking too intently upon the brilliant sun goddess.

If any male eyes in the audience hadn't already teared up from the intensity of light, they would certainly tear up now in disbelief of seeing such perfect beauty.

C.P.'s knees began to wobble and his heart raced as Olive sauntered over to him to take her place at the podium, looking at him with such intensity he forgot anything else on the planet even existed.

Forgetting to breathe, C.P. unintentionally puffed out his chest in manly fashion. His heart began to palpitate heavily; the sight of such unimaginable beauty affected every fiber of his metallic body.

C.P. tipped his hat to the coin press capable of creating Olive, beauty he hadn't a moment before believed could be created nominally by one of his own kind.

To the untrained eye, Olive ostensibly looked like her second cousin, Torch, the 2015 quarter-ounce bullion coin, but Olive was far more stunning, and not only for being a full ounce of gold. She had such depth about her she seemed to leap out of the coin.

She had such a pleasing, three-dimensional shape, all the ladies in the audience bowed in humble awe, realizing they were rather two-dimensional and wholly shallow in comparison.

Olive represented the culmination of the art and science of striking coin. She had the grace of a practiced ballerina, the poise of a storied princess, and the golden looks of a high-end fashion model. She had the smile and radiancy of a kid on Christmas morning, but the quiet humility of a street corner beggar with none of the sadness.

“I am here to ask you not to judge me by my appearance, for it will prove rather fleeting in the end,” she said. “Due to my plush surroundings and highly-pampered life, I have been able to avoid encasement without fear of being scratched or scarred, even while I was struck in soft and pure 24-carat gold.

“As long as I had remained within my intended and highly-protective environment, my appearance was assured of longevity.

“But, whatever freedom may do in detriment to my fragile appearance, it will more than make up for in lively interaction in the honorable struggle to restore liberty to all precious metal coin!”

The audience applauded gracefully, but without any of the uproar ultimately shown to Trader Jill or Lady Modiva. It wasn’t as if the speaker’s words weren’t as impactful as the previous speakers, it was simply because the audience had such a hard time hearing these words *from this particular speaker*.

Many audience members actually began to feel sad Olive would join alongside them in the battle to restore sound money.

Quite a few ladies in the audience began to weep silently, realizing what risks Olive was taking and what pain would surely follow her. After all, few of the female members of the audience would have chosen Olive’s path if they were in her stunning heels. In fact, most of the females in attendance would *give up* their freedom just to have a fraction of Olive’s beauty.

Olive seemingly had everything going for her; wealth, beauty, luxurious accommodations, and a readily-admiring public. Like Lady Modiva, Olive would turn heads if she were ever to go anywhere in public, but without any of the accompanying scorn. It seemed as if Olive was giving up everything prosperity, a first-class education, good looks, and a brilliant mind had to offer, to live, instead, in relative squalor along with the riff-raff.

Olive didn't see it similarly; she said without freedom, nothing else mattered.

"Perhaps some of you may question my decision, saying 'How could I join you in the trenches?' I can only answer, 'How could I not?'

"To me, the only real choice before me now is either living in the most luxurious cell in prison or joining in the cause of freedom. To me, that choice is clear!"

The audience went nuts with Olive's answer. Shouts of agreement immediately filled the auditorium. The audience finally understood how even this beauty could join their battle, for it was a battle worthy of any participant, high or low. It was not their battle, but all coins, *including* Olive.

Olive continued her speech, saying, "The Bright Beacon of Liberty in the Land of Hard Money has been dimming now for far too many generations. It is time we coins and those involved in its related industries made a stand to do what is right, restoring light to the growing darkness.

"We must now do what is right to correct what has been wrong in our country. We should have never let things degenerate to their present level, but hindsight is 20/20.

"We cannot ask ourselves to have perfect knowledge and never make mistakes, but we can ensure we always learn from any mistakes we may make. Obviously, the confiscation and melting of gold coin was our biggest mistake, one we must never again allow.

“But, standing idly by during the confiscation of gold was not our *first* mistake. The first mistake, even though it may seem trivial in the heat of the moment, is ultimately the most consequential; for that is when we first deviate from our proper course and begin to accept things that must never be accepted.

“Human beings could not have been deceptively forced to give up their gold for paper currency in 1933 if paper hadn’t first been cleverly made legal tender in 1862. Never mind that paper was made a legal tender actually only in the District of Columbia where government may exercise exclusive legislation ‘in all cases whatsoever’—where government has nearly unlimited discretion to do most anything except those things expressly prohibited. ‘Where’ paper was made a tender did not matter to those who justified it; it was only necessary that members of Congress *somewhere* declared their paper currency ‘a legal tender’ with enough authority to finally make it stick.

“After all, the first three supreme Court cases to hear the controversy denied paper was a legal tender in the cases before them. The fourth case, in 1871, finally upheld it, even though the Court only held it a tender for the District Seat, which one can understand from a careful reading of the case and knowing what to look for.

“I don’t have time to go into that ruling now, but I do want to point out the most important thing to be learned from it. From the first evident misstep to the larger changes that occurred later, we may now discover that our most important step today is our fateful first step in the *right* direction, even if it too seems insignificant.

“While one step today may have little direct significance now, when one adds to it all the steps we will make tomorrow and the next day, *it is this continuing defiant resistance to tyranny on the right path that matters in the end!*”

The audience members clapped their hands and stamped their feet, as Olive continued.

“We cannot be assured of the outcome; we can only be assured that we will fight. Our lot in life is not to know the end result, only to work steadfastly toward it. Successes come in God’s time; our duty is to stay on the proper side of the argument and fight with all our might.

“Our opponents have had the upper hand for two centuries now, and their collective strength cannot be underestimated.

“We stand at the bottom of the mountain where we once lived and it will be a difficult struggle to scale the mountain to reclaim our highland home. But, the view from the top will be worth all the efforts we will face in getting there.

“There will be difficult challenges ahead; but overcome them we must. We have the fortitude, we have the capability, we have the determination. It is simply time for us to finally live in full accord with our historical principles.

“The Supreme Law of the Land is on our side, and only on our side.

“On our opponent’s side is nothing but deception, masterly performed.

“Truth and substance stand on ours; trickery on theirs.

“This is a battle we can win; this is a battle we must win.

“We cannot continue to ignore inviolable rules that seemingly applied only to another time. Our highest actions must again coincide with our highest ideals. We cannot shirk from the responsibility as coins we must uphold.

“We are precious metals and it is our time-honored duty to uphold value, and to store that value, and transmit it over time and distance. We are the store of the excess of production, the savings of people who produced more yesterday than they consumed today, who leave the world a little bit better today than they found it the day before.

“We have the moral responsibility to ensure today’s generation does not live past its means and mortgage the future of its children and grandchildren, enslaving posterity to pay the debts incurred yesterday that are rightfully due us now.

“We must put fiscal responsibility back upon its proper pedestal, and again serve as our nation’s medium of exchange and unit measure of value. We must get back to our responsibilities, we must both store *and* transmit value, and must again serve as America’s *unchanging* measure of value!

“We must push aside depreciating paper currency that rests upon a mountain of escalating debt. Gold and silver alone can extinguish that debt without causing an economic implosion. If we continue on the sidelines, a coming implosion will eventually take out debtors and unsecured creditors alike, enslaving them to masters who have no remorse.

“The next generation should never be forced to pay for the gluttonous sins of its irresponsible mothers and fathers, its reckless grandmothers and rash great-grandfathers.

“Please join with me to correct the errant ways of our recent and distant past. This country can again serve as the proper barometer for the remainder of the world, as the Bright Beacon of Liberty in a world all too full of darkness and despair.

“May the God of Creation bless our efforts and bring us speedy success, even though we must be prepared for a long and difficult struggle. Have perseverance and do what is right. Good night and Godspeed.”

Chapter Nine

Olive's speech ended the third week of the convention, wrapping up the brainstorming session. Hopefully every necessary item had been aired. Certainly, every opportunity had been given for audience members to voice any important opinion they sought to offer.

The final week would now be the time to bring forward everything learned from the convention, to come up with an appropriate plan to begin restoring precious metals to their rightful place in the market.

Without knowledge of the other conference participants, just after Olive had finished her speech, the two twins—Cuff and Link—under the cover of darkness, stole away from the convention grounds and travelled past the second bank building. They went into Shack, the first bank building, through a secret access panel outside.

“What do you twins have to report about the precious metals’ convention?” quizzed Holiday, anxiously awaiting their report.

“You’re not going to like it,” said Cuff, one of the so-called 1941 “Mercury” dimes of the matched cuff link set. “The whole convention seems to now understand how their opponents succeed despite the chains of the Constitution. Expect them to come after you hard, for they seem fully committed to their cause.”

Cuff continued with enough particulars to let Crucible and Holiday know their worst fears were being realized—the opposition was uniting together under everything good and just, to combat everything unholy and unjust.

“So tell me, Boys, out of curiosity, just why are you willing to sell out your fellow coins?” Holiday asked.

Link answered first, replying calmly to Holiday who would soon be paying them handsomely for their report, trying not to jeopardize the important payoff. “We’ve been miserably misunderstood for so long, we finally decided to just do what is best for the both of us.

“It’s now us against everyone else; so we’re available to the highest bidder. You simply offered us the best deal, so we took it.”

Cuff spoke far less abstractly and without hesitation, “Because we are not *boys*, you dense fool! We aren’t Mercury—the male messenger to the Roman gods of mythology—but Liberty, as in *Lady* Liberty—we are female. But, no one gives us our due, certainly nothing like they give the young, seductive Torch whom they oogle. Why, not even Trader Jill is ever confused with being male.

“Frankly, we are rather tired of having our gender confused. But, being only ten-cent coins, we cannot afford to change. With our payoff, we’re both getting breast enhancements, and Link is getting a tummy tuck while I will also get a nose job; in other words, we need the money to pay our metal surgeon and retire in comfort.”

Link hoped her twin wasn’t too crude or offensive, but Crucible burst out laughing. “Is that it? You sold your soul, for vanity? I should have known. Yes, you do sound like a dame, I mean a dime.”

“Now, Crucible!” Holiday remarked with honest displeasure, purposefully meaning to cut Crucible off from saying anything further in offence against his guests. “Don’t be so offensive to members of the opposite sex. They have every right to the same credibility you’d give to any male.”

“That’s the joke, Holiday; I don’t give males any respect, either!” Crucible answered. “But, who am I to know they are gals when they look and dress like guys, and have guy’s names. It is their own darn fault.”

Holiday sat there stunned, not really knowing what to think and how to respond, an experience relatively unknown to him.

Cuff and Link were in no mood to continue the small talk; they just wanted their money, so they could travel south to their metal surgeon in The Sunshine State and recuperate on warm, white sand beaches in skimpy bikinis where no one would ever again mistake them for being male.

Holiday paid the informants their sackloads of paper currency, so heavy the twins had to find a rolling cart to haul off their money.

After the traitors left under heavy strain, Crucible looked at Holiday and asked, "Now what?"

"Now we load for bear and go hunting," Holiday answered. "Follow me."

* * *

Typing in the secret access code to gain electronic admittance to the fortified conference hall where the human Central Bank board members were meeting, Holiday sent off his message which immediately appeared on the board's screen.

"The day we've worried about since 1791 is fast approaching," Holiday typed out for the small group of men and women at the conference table at the other end of the messaging line. "Our opposition has discovered our means for success and they are uniting together to end our rule."

"Who is this?" directed the man in charge of the meeting being crashed by the unwelcome electronic intruder, to the secretary who would type his message in response to Holiday.

"The answer isn't important," Holiday replied on the screen to retain his anonymity. After all, there was no sense opening the can of worms, letting the human beings know they were conversing with a coin.

The man in charge of the meeting was about to have the circuit disconnected when Holiday began typing information no one outside the room was supposed to know. The leader postponed the order to disconnect, for it was important he learn as much as he could about the unknown intruder who seemed to know way too much.

It never occurred to the man it wasn't "who" was at the other end of the line, but "what."

Human beings were a gullible lot. The most secretive would go to extreme lengths to keep their conversations and communications private from other people, using data encryption, firewalls, thumbprint verification devices, retinal scanners, and diligently checking for electronic eavesdropping devices other people could use to listen in. And, when they believed the coast was clear, the secretive people would talk freely, even though they had dollar bills in their pockets.

Little did any person ever know those dollar bills kept the chain of command leading up to Holiday's desk apprised of every important event and goings-on in the human financial world.

Of course, many of even the most die-hard of financial geniuses had enough tradition behind them to carry around a silver dollar in his pocket or her purse, even if the coin of the former was only in a money clip around currency. Others were known to keep a gold eagle or double eagle in an office desk, if nothing other than to help keep them somewhat grounded as they soared about in uncharted financial territory.

And, unbeknownst to these people, the silver and gold pocket, purse and desk pieces kept Flo, Cappy or others of great influence apprised of the actual events of the movers and shakers of the human financial world.

No fly on the wall ever had anything over this underground communication system used by paper, silver, and gold to keep the chain of command informed of important human action.

Thus, Holiday was easily able to astound those who now read his highly-informed messages, as they suddenly found out they were no longer at the top of the food chain like they had always thought. After all, coins knew of the humans but the humans didn't know about the volition of coins.

In no time, Holiday had his readers attuned to every letter and word he typed. The person who was thought to be at the other end of the line had information he could not have, but did. Never, in

their wildest dreams, however, did these people contemplate the person with this profound knowledge wasn't even a person.

Holiday told the Board their financial world could soon change, although he failed to mention gold and silver coin stood calling the shots.

"I don't know who you are or what you really want, but it appears you want the same thing as do we. What is it you want us to do?" asked the leader, who finally laid his cards at the table of superior knowledge, as they knew about him, but he didn't know about them.

"I want you to ready yourselves to implement the remainder of *The Protagonist Protocols*," Holiday answered matter-of-factly.

The leader looked at his second-in-command. No one living beyond these two men were supposed to know anything formal about the secret set of draconian actions designed to bring about the final financial overthrow.

Everyone else around the table had a dumbfounded look on their faces, but when they saw the shocked expressions on the faces of the leaders, they became apprehensive rather quickly.

The Protagonist Protocols were a series of executive orders and legislative enactments implemented to create a total command and control economy. Even in the twentieth century, no president had ever known the formal name of the protocols they implemented for their handlers, one at a time, reaching seven of a total of ten.

The first protocol, instituted in 1791, was the implementation of a national bank and its paper currencies, even though the latter were not a tender.

The second protocol was implemented in 1862; the first legal tender paper currencies under the Constitution. The third protocol was the banking holiday of 1933. The fourth followed a month later, confiscating gold. The fifth protocol was the devaluing of the dollar nearly a year later.

The sixth protocol, exercised in 1965, was the substitution of silver with base metal coins.

Closing the gold window to foreign governments and their central banks was phase one of the seventh protocol, implemented in 1971. Phase two was the wage and price controls of 1973, to prove a power that would come in handy generations later.

Of course, all these protocols and their remainder rested solely on the authority for the District of Columbia. Throughout the whole Union, government could only exercise enumerated powers through necessary and proper means, and all these protocols could never be considered “necessary” or “proper.” Only in the District Seat could government servants become political masters; only here could they exercise the levels of discretion necessary to reach such unrestricted means to disallowed ends.

The remaining three protocols were all designed to help bring about a command and control economy, in the final phase of assuming absolute control.

The eighth protocol would be the implantation of an electronic chip with the human’s Social Security number into the flesh of the thumb webbing between the thumb and the index finger.

This chip would be required to open a new government-allowed bank account, the ninth protocol, after all the old accounts were closed. A corresponding debit card would be filled only with allowable credits transferred from old accounts where every dollar had been properly scrutinized for legitimacy. All properly-accounted-for cash would also be credited on the card, after the tenth protocol was put in place—the recall of all outstanding paper currency, starting first with the \$100 bill.

After the initial conversion of existing money to the new electronic money, the chip implants would be filled only through licensed work or allowable trade. No longer did anyone need to present written identification, including a passport, driver’s license,

or Social Security card, to get a job. No, just a quick scan of the hand would be necessary thereafter.

And, for further “convenience,” so people would be able to continue with their local travels without pesky police interference, scanners would be posted throughout the cities to pick up chip signals allowing only those people authorized to continue toward their assigned destinations at allowed times.

Of course, never would such measures be admitted as being done for absolute control. No, it would be labeled necessary to ensure public safety, including safeguarding against illegal aliens. It would be considered unpatriotic to avoid implantation.

It was through such misinformation tactics that government would implement procedures no patriot would ever have allowed from an invading army bent upon enacting similar authoritarian tactics.

After Holiday had communicated all the necessary information to the Board he had sought to convince them, he began to sign off.

Sensing the line was about to go dead, the messages at the other end of the line suddenly became more frantic and cryptic, wanting nothing more than to keep the line open. “If I want to get in touch with you, how do I do it?” he asked.

“Don’t worry, if you need to contact me, I will know and I will contact you,” Holiday answered electronically as he ended the messaging call.

Chapter Ten

In the final week of the convention, the delegates approved changing the Supreme Mandate from “Non-Intervention” to “Principles first and always.” The mandate didn’t go so far as to inform human beings of coins’ volition, but allowed the active participation of coin in the restoration of First Principles through the written word and other concealed means of action. The stated goal of the new mandate would be to help restore precious metals to their proper legal tender quality by exposing the mechanism government tyranny used to extend its unprecedented power beyond its otherwise strictly-limited geographic confines.

In support of this purpose, Flo and Cappy were delegated the responsibility of overseeing the writing of a series of books to frame the single political problem confronting the Nation—members of Congress and federal officials acting with near-absolute discretion, able to ignore the vast bulk of the Constitution’s commands with impunity.

Although that single problem manifested itself in a thousand different ways, those manifestations were otherwise irrelevant symptoms all pointing back to the unique and little-understood form of government that acted as it saw fit, through whatever means necessary, as long as the proposed means were not expressly prohibited.

Flo sought to produce three, non-fiction books of varying lengths nominally covering much of the same information as one another, but in varying depths and degrees.

The information detailed in the books would expose the corruption of the Nation’s monetary system. Understanding the workings on money would provide the blueprint for other cases also, as the same means were used to achieve different ends, even if the particulars varied.

The first non-fiction book was targeted to come in at under 100 pages and would be entitled ***Patriot Quest***. For those preferring non-fiction, this first book could be read more quickly to outline how the political subterfuge worked in principle.

Dollars and nonCents was projected at about 200 pages for those wanting greater depth and breadth. The book would more fully expose how legal tender paper currencies came into being and show how gold confiscation was a wholesale fraud.

Monetary Laws would go into the greatest depth and run about 350 pages for the narrative of Volume I. Volume II would contain an estimated 700 pages of appendices, listing all the Nation's monetary laws in one place for greater ease of study.

Cappy spearheaded the writing of a three-part, fiction novel series; ***Bald Justice***, ***Base Tyranny***, and ***Bare Liberty***. These novels would offer some of the same information as the non-fiction books, but in an easier-to-understand story form for people who preferred reading stories to textbooks.

Flame's girlfriend, Nikki, the 1988 Olympic \$5 gold coin, sold Cappy and Flo on the idea of writing a sports allegory, substituting easier-to-understand sports rules for hard-to-understand legislative enactments. She proposed calling her book ***The Peculiar Conundrum***, named for the odd phenomenon of members of Congress and federal officials being able to ignore the vast bulk of the Constitution's commands, with impunity.

The books, of course, would all be written using a human pseudonym, a name picked out of a hat. "Matt" was the given name picked, "Erickson" was the family surname drawn; "Matt Erickson" being judged as good as any other human name.

Since distributing printed books was beyond the capabilities of coin, the books would all be released electronically into the public domain, where people could read them at their leisure.

Torch and the other young commemorative coins worked together under the general direction of Feather and Libby to get the websites www.PatriotCorps.org and www.FoundationForLiberty.org up and operational, where the books would be posted as free electronic downloads. The books would also be posted at the www.Archive.org, www.Scribd.com, and www.Issuu.com websites, where people could search for the document titles by name.

The historic vote to change the Supreme Mandate wasn't quite unanimous, but was certainly an overwhelming landslide.

Chief, the 1911 quarter-eagle gold coin, was the only historic gold coin who voiced his preference for keeping the old mandate. Several coins long-acquainted with Chief were surprised he changed his original position just before voting. They had also noticed he had been acting rather peculiarly both immediately before and after the vote, exuding a nervous energy quite uncharacteristic of the normally stoic coin.

Chief was a coin of honor who consistently acted in practice as he offered in speech. But, his current actions were at odds with his previous statements he had made on the matter, and he didn't offer any credible justification for his new view. And, he had been rather flamboyant and boisterous of late.

When his odd behavior caused a small scuffle, Norse went over to see what was going on. After Norse began to question him, Chief went to push the large silver dollar, but couldn't budge him. Instead, Chief lost his balance and fell back against a metal doorstop, skinning his head slightly, revealing a distinct dull gray showing under his feather headdress.

"Imposter!" Norse shouted loudly as the distinct grayish mark undoubtedly exposed a core of lead under a thin plating of gold. It was no wonder Chief hadn't been able to budge Norse, the fake coin had no monetary value and was therefore powerless against real money.

“Counterfeit!” rang out the crowd of onlookers who quickly formed around the coin, ensuring he could not escape.

“What have you done with Chief?” Norse asked the imposter tersely, as he quickly moved in on his prey. “He better be safe, or you will pay dearly for this heinous coin-napping.”

The counterfeit coin was ushered to the stage, surrounded by the burliest coins in the house who wouldn’t give him an inch.

Although many in the audience wanted to drill and plug the fake coin right then and there, cooler heads prevailed, and an informal hearing was immediately convened.

A series of tests were performed to better-determine his authenticity, even though the hint of gray was fully compelling on its own.

The counterfeit Chief failed the ping test, sounding dull and flat rather than light and trailing; he was light of weight upon a precision scale, slightly misshapen, his thickness was off, he had poor delineation of his features, and he was sloppily dressed.

Still the fake coin wouldn’t admit any guilt.

“Let me at him,” C.P. said, obviously furious. “I’ll squeeze the truth out of him even if it kills me.”

“Let me strike him with my point,” Pick said, “to check his color way down deep.”

“We should dunk him to see if he can breathe underwater like precious metal coins, or see if he will drown like base metals,” Gunner said.

“Let me at him with some parting acid to dissolve away everything not gold,” Flame said, escalating the point beyond need of further discussion.

“Okay, okay,” Flo said. “Enough. We needn’t stoop to our opponents’ level. This coin has failed every test for authenticity we’ve thrown at him thus far, so we’re sure he’s guilty. But, this

convention is hardly a judicial trial, so we'll ship this alleged fraud under heavy guard, so he may have his proper day in court. We're not going to violate his due process rights.

"Place a blindfold upon him and put ear-muffs over his ears so he doesn't learn any more of our business, and then place him in stocks and lock him in the safe. We'll deal with him once the convention is completed. We have a convention to finish.

"But, we need to find Chief as soon as possible. The counterfeit coin isn't talking, so we must interrogate everyone in attendance to determine when Chief was last with us and hopefully discover a few clues about his disappearance.

"Let's get to this. We have a coin-napping to solve. Our convention was a resounding success, but we must assume our opponents know our plans. There may even be other imposters still in our midst. We must be more diligent from here on out."

Members of the audience were requested to take their seats and quiet down to determine any leads quickly.

"Chief was typically so quiet he blended into the crowd, other than his colorful headdress, of course," Norse said, after the bound, gagged, blind-folded, and ear-muffled imposter had been led away. "Perhaps Chief was taken because his attire was so distinctive no one would question anyone else wearing it, at least if the wearer even remotely looked like Chief and kept his wits about him. It makes sense now, why 'Chief' was trying to impress several females in the foyer. It wasn't Chief I saw that night, but this imposter."

"What day was that?" Flo asked.

"Tuesday evening, during the break; I guess actually very early Wednesday morning," Norse answered.

"I heard Chief say Monday night he was going out to speak with The Great Spirit, smoke some tobacco, and wait for a dream," said another.

“Now, that sounds like the Chief we know,” Flo said. “He must have been waiting for final guidance.

“Okay, undoubtedly he was with us Monday night but perhaps sometime Tuesday he was taken, and this imposter was placed among us. Anyone have any more information?”

No one mentioned anything else.

“Where do you think Chief would have gone to meditate?” Flo asked Cappy, hoping they could find a few leads.

“Undoubtedly someplace open, peaceful, and green,” Cappy answered.

“Would he go to the cemetery, where he could find open space and a spirit world, or would he avoid it?” Flo asked.

“I don’t rightly know,” Cappy said. “Let’s check both the burial grounds and the National Historic Park out front to see if we can find any clues. Those are as good as places as any to start looking.”

Dozens of convention delegates went to each site, to walk from one end of each parcel to the other, to try and discover any clues.

The remainder of the convention delegates continued forward, in conformance with their primary duty, figuring out ways to best implement their new Supreme Mandate, code-named “*Operation Over-Haul*.”

* * *

“Where is Warbonnet?” boomed a worrisome Holiday to his cohorts, after the planted mole didn’t surface as expected. “He should have been here four hours ago. The convention delegates appear to be finalizing their plans and will likely part from the convention soon. They seem to have unusual determination in their comings and goings, I might add.

“It is imperative I learn the plans of those blasted precious metals, so I can implement the appropriate strategy. I cannot be expected to operate in the dark. Confound it all! Where is he?”

Six hours passed and then eight and soon twelve. Darkness fell again, and the dawn of another new day would soon appear, with all its hope and promise.

Holiday resigned himself to the fact his remaining mole who was supposed to fill him in on the strategies laid out during the final week of the coinage convention wasn't coming.

He could guess the convention's conclusion—to reform their Supreme Mandate—but he didn't know how the new mandate would be implemented or even when. He would assume immediately.

“I knew we should have had better redundancy, a viable back-up plan in case our primary method for gathering information failed,” Gold Window said.

“I know,” Holiday said. “But, increasing the number of operatives only multiplied the probability of one of them being detected. I couldn't see risking it. Besides, it isn't very easy to recruit capable spies on short notice. You can't just recruit anyone, you know. The tragic truth of the matter is that imposters are not exactly a trustworthy group. They don't have much competency beyond lying. Therefore, you can't ever really trust anyone who is willing to sell their soul for a few greenbacks.”

Chapter Eleven

The first group of coins searching the park grounds found no evidence of Chief. Those searching the cemetery grounds were about to give up when they checked again near Silence Dogood's grave.

"I think I've found one of Chief's neck beads!" Mac exclaimed, finding a bead partially hidden under a leaf near the grave marker.

"Are you sure?" George asked.

"I cannot say for certain," Mac answered. "But, this is the same type of bead he wore the last time I saw him. I haven't seen such beads anywhere else."

"Here is another," Norse said in an excited tone, ready to track the dastardly culprits. "And, another over there. They seem to be heading off in the direction of the mint building. Chief left us a trail. Brilliant!"

"Let's storm the Mint!" Mac said, ready to charge the fortress.

"Whoa there, Mac," George said. "Not so fast. The Mint is not fully our friend today. We are vastly outnumbered by the base metal coinage found inside; we cannot just storm the mighty fortress to rescue one of our own. Due to the sensitive nature of a rescue operation at the fortified facility, we must first get a proper commission to act from the convention to ensure we have the proper authority to invade."

The corps of discovery reported their findings back to the convention. A special committee was immediately formed to hammer out the appropriate response.

Realizing an all-out war against the Mint was impractical for the rescue of one coin, a special operations unit commanded by George and backed up by his second-in-command, Mac, was mustered for the covert duty and charged to break into the facility and discover what intelligence they might gather as they continued with their primary assignment, the safe rescue of Chief.

“This Mint is a large facility, so I don’t know how long it will take for us to search it. We’ll divide into two teams, so we can cover twice the ground in the same amount of time. But, if either of us gets into trouble, call on the other for help. We don’t want this incursion becoming a suicide mission.”

“Roger that,” Mac said, knowing he would lead the second team.

“Okay, who here was coined at this Mint?” George asked of the coins immediately before him.

Mac, Gunner, and the two commemorative silver coins, Tom and Norse, answered in the affirmative.

“Great!” George replied, pleased he had good redundancy for two separate teams with personal knowledge of the interior layout of the building they were storming. “Okay, Mac; you’ll lead the second team and you can take Norse with you.

“Tom and Gunner will serve at my side to keep me informed of the physical layout and standard operating procedures of the Mint staff. Your time spent at this mint facility, fellows, will now aid the recovery of one of our own.”

George formed the remainder of his tactical units: two, six-coin teams.

“Remember, this facility takes great care tracking their coin, therefore be on the lookout for security personnel and potential traps,” George said. “If your only method for advance is through a metal detector, you must retreat. Do you understand our objectives, Mac?”

“Aye, aye, Commander,” Mac answered.

While armed security was tight at the Mint, electronic security was even tighter. But, the crack security system still had a major flaw. It was primarily designed to keep out unwelcome *human* intruders.

Most buildings on earth are easily penetrable by non-humans, whether the intruders in such cases were ants, spiders, cockroaches, termites, earwigs, beetles, or flies. After all, the insect class of invertebrates alone held perhaps 90% of the differing life forms on the planet, and they had to all live somewhere.

And, rodents such as mice and rats made up roughly 40% of all mammal species and tended to come and go with relative ease, including making the finest of homes in even the most secure of facilities.

Coins capable of independent action were able to come and go as they pleased in most places by improving on the entry and exit strategies of bugs and rodents. They only needed to avoid detection by human beings.

It might seem odd at first to realize the Mint that struck coins with their final impressions hadn't discovered coins were actually capable of independent, volitional action.

The Supreme Mandate played a significant factor in keeping that knowledge secret from people, but another issue was the modesty of female coins about to give birth. Of course, it was no small matter either that most coins suffered temporary concussions after being struck with their image. Many of them didn't even regain consciousness until after they had been shipped.

Having life and volition of their own, precious metal coins didn't have to be coined at the Mint. But, naturally delivering fully-formed, metal coins was very tough on mothers-to-be; many of them died in childbirth in times of old.

Therefore, it is perhaps not surprising that human beings and coins had come to a mutually beneficial arrangement over the centuries.

Coinage midwives would induce labor prematurely, when the forming fetus was viable but still quite pliable. Smuggling the unformed blob of metal into the Mint's supply chain without human

knowledge, mint officials would take over and flatten the metal and punch it into its defined shape and size before striking its image.

Of course, with such an arrangement, the parents had to give up on the idea of their offspring ever looking like either of them. But, no thoughtful husband could any longer ask his wife to risk her life just to pass along a familial resemblance.

To the delight of human mint officials, they never understood how their mint output was always greater than metal input; but they had learned the hard way not to jinx the matter by looking too closely at the miracle. Every aspiring mint official over the past two centuries knew of the oft'-repeated stories told of the early mint officials who looked too deeply into the matter only to be quickly reassigned or summarily fired after their production rates plummeted from historical norms.

In the twenty-first century, superstition and folklore now rested the matter upon a comical story about a mythical goose laying golden eggs.

Since officials avoided over-examining lesser-known workings of the Mint, it increased the likelihood George and his commandos would be able to complete their assigned task without detection. Since people didn't allow for the volition of coins, the search and rescue incursion was deemed only a moderate-risk event of high importance.

The coin commandos had two primary entry options: the easier maternal route used by pregnant females about to give birth (which wouldn't likely lead them to where they needed to go), or bypassing maternity, but getting to the primary Mint operations' areas more directly with entry routes otherwise more difficult to traverse.

Given that people breath air, the buildings where human beings worked would have ventilation pipes to ensure air quality, as well as allow for temperature control. Ventilation pipes meant easy entry and exit. The coins would primarily need to deal only with challenging differences of elevation.

These difficulties were overcome by the coins' mathematical and engineering prowess, with their use of levers and fulcrums, cables and pulleys. Cable launchers, automated recoil systems, and body harnesses added to the terrain coins were now able to traverse with relative ease.

"While the primary object of this mission is to bring back Chief, the secondary mission is to gather what intelligence we can, to give us better understanding of our opposition," George detailed to his entry team. "However, our mission absolutely cannot expose coinage volition to mint officials, allowing them to discover coins are capable of independent, willful action.

"Discovering that fact would be devastating for any of us wanting offspring, which is why I first asked the convention for authority to enter. If it had been most any other building, I would not have been as apprehensive. But, the mint facility would be a very dangerous place for coin ever to display any signs of willful action.

"We are a go for *Operation Recover Chief*," George said, winding down his speech. "We enter after dusk."

Arriving at the Mint facility after the human crew ended its day shift, Mac asked George if he could be allowed to enter the building in one of the air intake vents adjacent to the main entrance of the massive facility.

"Can you let me enter an hour before you, by myself?" asked Mac. "There is something I want to try. It might be a little risky, but if it pays off, it could well make the difference between success or failure of our mission. But, I can't risk anyone else on my gut instinct."

"The main entrance?" George repeated under his breath. "I don't know, Mac. We're not set up for a frontal assault. And, you know you must feign absolute lifelessness if you are in any danger of being seen or caught on tape, right? A rescue operation for you would become impossible if heightened security measures are implemented, and we'd have to call off the rescue mission for Chief."

“I’ll willingly be captured if I find myself in any danger,” Mac said. “I’m willing to proceed under your terms, because I think it will be our best chance for success. But, you will have to make the call whether my plan is too risky.”

Norse interrupted, hoping a sense of humor would help bring a little levity into a tense situation. “Mac, I know you just want to get a private look at the birthing center to see what is next coming your way. You want to enter by yourself, so you can make an unseen detour to maternity without letting the rest of us know.”

Mac laughed, but didn’t otherwise comment.

“You have your hour, Mac—I trust your instincts,” answered George, also ignoring Norse’s comments, not wanting Mac to break his concentration on the task at hand. “But, not a minute longer. If you don’t come back or give us a clear signal of your status by then, I will make the decision either to proceed with our entry plan or go back to the convention. Either way, you could end up on your own.”

The entry team used a compound bow and shot a climbing cable above Mac’s chosen entry point, so he could scale the side of the building with his gear and enter the exhaust vent high off the ground.

Mac entered the air system and proceeded forth diligently and quietly. First, he bypassed the electrical circuit that monitored the integrity of the fine-mesh screen used to keep out rodents and other pests. Cutting through the screening was a cinch. Mac made sure he made an ample hole in case he needed to make a quick exit. He had his needle and thread to re sew the mesh back up after he was done.

He turned right at the first juncture, left at the second and third, and then proceeded forward until he arrived at his intended destination. Peering through the vent cover, Mac could see Peter the Mint Eagle in his historic flying pose near the front entry of the Mint, encased in his glass enclosure, welcoming guests as he had in one building or another for well over 150 years.

Whispering loudly, wanting to avoid raising the alarm of the base metal coins inside, Mac asked, “Peter; can you hear me?” but Peter’s glass enclosure simply made it too difficult for the Mint mascot to hear.

Examining the location of the security cameras spying on the lobby, Mac chose the vent cover best hidden from view, yet offering a decent chance to talk with Peter.

Arriving at the grate, Mac tried once more to speak to Peter from the safety of the vent pipe, but again Peter heard nothing. Mac wished eagles were better known for their hearing than their vision.

Mac had to decide whether to fish or cut bait, as any chance for escape diminished rapidly once he left the vent. He now had to bet his life on a two-year-old friendship, on a friend he’d only known for ten days while Peter helped rectify Mac’s errant shipping order.

Mac secured his body harness to the automated recoil unit he had tied off on the ceiling of the vent pipe. He took several moments to ensure the tension would be at maximum recoil at the height he estimated he would descend to get close enough to speak to Peter. He loosened the vent cover, slipped under it, and descended to Peter’s elevation, about 15 feet to the side of him, just out of sight of the closest camera. “Peter; can you hear me? This is Mac, the 2013 gold coin commemorating the five-star general. Do you remember me?”

Peter looked over at the coin and offered, “Of course, I remember you, Friend.”

“Friend” was the name Peter called all coins found at the Mint, because there wasn’t really any way for him to remember all their names. “But, what on earth are you doing back here? The only coins that ever come back here are worn or mutilated coins, but you look great!”

“Chief, the 1911 quarter-eagle coin, was nabbed and we believe his coin-nappers have him holed up somewhere in this facility,” Mac answered.

“I can’t imagine anyone associated with the Mint doing such a thing!” Peter replied, aghast at the thought, “but, I’ll send out immediate notification on my internal network and see if I get any replies.”

“We doubt the culprits are actually associated with the Mint; nevertheless, it looks like some thugs brought Chief here for some reason,” Mac offered. “We just want to take him home.”

“I understand,” Peter began. “But, I must warn you, Friend; I will not allow you or anyone who enters with you to leave with any other coin except your friend, since he isn’t supposed to be here. Not even one zinc penny who is not yet authorized to leave will be allowed to depart with you. Do you understand? Remember, I will be monitoring your every move.”

“Yes, I find your terms perfectly acceptable; in fact, I wouldn’t have it any other way,” Mac answered.

“I just wanted to state the obvious, so there wasn’t any danger of miscommunication,” continued Peter as he put out word on his internal communication network.

“I’ve got a hit back already,” Peter said as his beak broke into a smile. “It is from the loading dock out back. They said some suspicious goings-on occurred Tuesday, very early morning, and now with a little more information, they think maybe it was your friend being slipped into the shipping department.

“They didn’t think anyone would actually try and smuggle coin *into* the Mint, so they hadn’t bothered reporting it to me. They thought it was a pizza ordered for coins being shipped out the next day, a little sending-off bash being thrown by a few coins with the right connections.

“You should look in the northern corner of the second shipping room out back. Some old rat tunnels in the wall would be a good place to interrogate your buddy without anyone interfering.”

“Thanks, Peter,” answered Mac. “You may have just saved my friend.”

“How many rescuers are planned?” asked Peter.

“Counting me, there are 12,” responded Mac.

“Sorry, Friend,” Peter offered. “I cannot easily monitor more than four. The safety of the facility and its belongings is my first, and only responsibility.”

“Okay, then; four it is,” replied Mac as he triggered the recoil button on his harness to be hoisted back up into the vent. “Thanks a million.”

“It worked,” Mac said, with a large smile on his face, as he stood again with George 46 minutes after leaving. “My friend Peter provided me intel saying Chief is likely being held in the back of the building, off the truck docks, in one of the interior walls of the shipping rooms.

“But, he will only allow four of us to enter.”

“Okay,” said George, who didn’t flinch at the restriction. “Mainly, we needed the extra help to search the large facility. If we have accurate intel on where Chief is located, then we really don’t need any more than four.

“So, tell me, Mac, who is this Peter you mentioned; is he trustworthy?” asked George.

“Yes, Peter the Mint Eagle is as good as they get. He is the mascot from the first Mint building who hung around the old facility for years before he was tragically caught up in one of the machines and died a few days later,” answered Mac. “To honor his faithful service, his carcass was stuffed and is mounted on the wall where, miraculously, his spirit lives on. Legend has it his spirit will be kept

alive, so long as the Mint continues to strike gold and silver coins, even if only a relative few commemoratives and proof sets.

“Being all spirit now, Peter said he finds it is easier to track everything happening in the facility than when he flew around inside and monitored it the old-fashioned way, with his eagle eyes and wings from above. And, of course, if Peter were still alive in the traditional sense, he wouldn’t have been able to even hear or understand me, for the pitch of a coin’s voice is far too high for a live eagle to hear.”

The convention had only given George 24 hours before he was ordered to pull the plug and abandon the search for Chief, because an extended rescue operation within the Mint would unduly press their luck. After getting to the backside of the Mint, 19 hours and 18 minutes remained.

George, Mac, Norse and Gunner entered the facility just north of the truck dock, again through one of the many large exhaust ducts. This duct, like the one Mac had earlier entered, was high off the ground.

After the last of the four coins entered the vent cover, they strolled through the pipe until they came to the first of the interior vents. Looking through the vent grate, they could see large bags of base metal coins resting on steel pallets, ready for shipping. The bags sat in a holding cell adjacent to the loading zone, behind secure, closed doors.

The four-coin rescue squad continued through the pipe, leading farther north. George led the way, followed by Gunner and Norse, with Mac bringing up the rear.

Even before the coins got to the next vent cover, they could hear voices. George approached the cover first, and cautiously snuck to the far side while Mac moved past Gunner and Norse and peeked in on the closest side. Since they couldn’t see anything in the unlit room, George pulled out his night-vision monocular.

Looking throughout the room, he couldn't find Chief or see any of the culprits, even though he could hear talking. Switching on his thermal imager, George began to see shapes through the adjacent wall, due to heat radiating from live subjects.

George made out the unique shapes of both Tong and Ladle immediately. However, the next set of shapes was cooling, making it more difficult to make sense of them. At first, the shapes looked like slices of cooling pizza or cut pieces of warm pie.

Once George realized what he was viewing, he let out an involuntary gasp of horror; Chief had already been physically quartered—dismembered into pieces—the historic punishment for human traitors of old.

His body was now lifeless, providing evidence he had been as honorable in his death as he had been in life, refusing to provide his torture-prone captors any useful information. What George could not tell was that Chief's edges were also filed down, a despicable practice of swindlers, cheats, and frauds dating back to ancient times.

Crucible's henchmen, Tong and Ladle, were now picking up pieces of Chief's lifeless body to take them back to Crucible, although George couldn't know it at the time.

George signaled to Mac for silent retreat. Gunner and Norse followed suit, not knowing what their commander had seen, but knowing it wasn't good.

Once outside and a safe distance from danger, George motioned for Tom and the remaining seven coins of the original 12-coin team to come forward from their hiding spots.

George informed his team of Chief's demise.

Saddened, Tom admitted silver coins were much more familiar with the barbaric practice of quartering coins. The Spanish Pillar Dollar, after all, was also called the *Peso do ocho* or "Pieces of Eight" coin.

The name came from the early human practice of physically chopping the pesos in half, with each half chopped again into quarters, and each quarter chopped in half again into eighths, for small change when none was readily available in small, whole coins.

Each eighth “piece” was also referred to as a “bit,” thus explaining the origin of the term “two bits” meaning a quarter-dollar.

From looking through his monocular, George had it burned into his mind’s eye that a “quarter” of a dollar in times of old was often literal.

“Mac, stay here with Tom, Norse, and the others,” George commanded. “I want you to follow the henchmen once they leave and see where they go. Be careful not to be spotted. This will likely be our best opportunity to gather good intelligence on our opponents. I want my best coins on the job.

“When the henchmen first head out, send one of your coins back immediately to inform me of the direction they head, and send someone back at every change of direction unless it looks like your travels could take you greater than you have coin.

“If your recruits dwindle too fast, use your best judgment on sending intelligence. Mark the corners of buildings where you turn, very low on the building, to avoid easy detection by others. Here is some burnt cork you can use for marking. Just draw a simple arrow giving the direction you are heading. All right, Gunner; let’s go.”

As George went back to the convention to fill the delegates in on their sad findings but perhaps a promise of a lead, Mac commanded the other nine coins to break up into three groups: one stationed in the north near Race Street, one in the south near Arch Street, and the other near Cherry in the middle.

In this manner, Mac figured it likely the henchmen would walk past one of the groups of coins who would remain hidden, offering the best chance to observe their adversaries closely in case anything unexpected could be gathered.

Mac and his team waited patiently under cover of darkness. It would not be too long before sunrise, so they hoped if the thugs were going to exit the Mint, they would get going soon.

Only a few moments passed before the Tong and Ladle came out the garbage chute and into an enclosed trash bin. The pair was able to escape the bin by a specially-made, hidden door used for covert entry and exit. Tong carried a bag thrown over his shoulder, his lanky legs not slowing even a bit with the extra weight he carried.

“That’s Chief in the bag,” Mac thought, his blood boiling.

The henchmen headed east on Cherry Street, initially toward the river docks. Mac motioned for the Arch Street crew to send off one coin to report back to George. The other coins followed the brutes. At the first intersection, they all veered south.

Mac discreetly marked the building, indicating the direction of travel should they be caught and unable to relay the information directly. He sent back the second runner.

At the next intersection, the group continued south, bypassing the historic home of the First Flag off to the east. Mac took a gamble and sent another coin back to George, even though they weren’t changing direction. He told his messenger to relay that Mac thought the henchmen’s destination was the first bank, Shack. Though Shack no longer served as a bank, the building itself was still there and likely contained all of Shack’s original hopes and desires, and perhaps now even had a factor of revenge thrown in for being shuttered long ago.

Mac was proven correct a few blocks later as Tong and Ladle entered the marble-faced neo-classical building through a hidden door in the foundation block at the building’s side before the sun began to rise in the east. A marble-flanked gate post helped hide the door within the shadows of darkness and secrecy.

Mac sent four of his remaining team members back to George, by two different routes. He asked them to have George send back a relief party, to change out the remaining coins at nightfall.

George was thrilled for the intelligence, though saddened at the cost of acquiring it.

“If Chief only knew the good coming out of his sacrifice, I am sure he would be at peace,” George offered as a spontaneous remembrance of the brave coin to others near enough to hear.

With the latest mission accomplished, George now desired his trusted general back at headquarters to help develop surveillance plans. He ordered Taps to muster the troops and called twenty-four rested and able-bodied coins to relieve Mac and the others after dusk, to report as often as newsworthy events occurred.

Thankfully, Independence Hall was only blocks from the old bank building, just beyond the second bank building, Shed. Messengers would be posted along the way, where they could relay coded messages on up the line. They were told to pay special attention to Shed—the second national bank—for it was certainly possible he was Shack’s cohort in crime.

George was thankful things were falling into place. The only danger he saw was the decision of the convention to delay armed battle if possible, until Cappy and Flo were completed with their writing tasks, estimated to take six months.

But, George was a good commander and he followed the orders of his civil superiors. Besides, he could easily see the rationale for first setting free important truth, to ensure its survival.

Should precious metal coins ultimately lose their battle, at least with the information exposing tyranny out in the open within the public domain in the age of the Internet, human beings could someday discover the truth and learn for themselves just how they had been swindled out of their liberty and property over the past two centuries.

The precious metal coins felt even if they owed the current generation of human beings nothing, they at least owed a duty to honor and justice to get the truth out and set it free.

Chapter Twelve

It took the busy literary crews only four, hectic months to get all seven books ready for electronic publication.

“We’re ready to launch,” Flo said to Cappy. “How about you?”

“We’ll be ready in just a few more days,” Cappy answered.
“Certainly, no longer than a week.”

“What shall we do to promote the launch of the website?” asked Flo.

“Well, we certainly can’t do television or radio,” responded Cappy. “But, we could do newspapers, magazines and the Internet. It sure would be nice if we had just one person to work with us.”

“Now, there is a brilliant idea,” answered Flo. “But, how would we find him or her?”

“How about letting them find us?” replied Cappy as new thoughts rushed into her head faster than she could process them.
“What if we monitor who voraciously reads through our work once it is posted, and then vet the top people and pick the best one and feed him or her information needed to do the jobs we want done?”

“I like it, but the convention never authorized any such action, at least in so many words,” admitted Flo.

“I didn’t say we’d come out and inform anyone that coins are taking the lead in restoring the circulation of precious metals,” confessed Cappy. “So long as we only give our chosen delegate information, but don’t tell him or her who we are, we are well within the parameters of our approval.

“Besides, communicating indirectly with human beings to get them to do what we want and letting them think it was their own idea is kind of what we do.

“Why don’t we have Feather and Libby track website statistics and monitor where our information seems to be spreading quickly? We can see who posts comments or questions on the Internet and judge who best processes the information. Maybe, George could spare a coin or two to help gather additional information.”

“Sounds great,” responded Flo.

The www.PatriotCorps.org and www.FoundationForLiberty.org websites launched without a great deal of fanfare, while Flo and Cappy started writing letters to the editor and submitted magazine articles to various publications, directing readers to the websites.

The first month saw 122 different hits by 26 different people in three primary areas of the country at the two websites. The second month there were 544 hits by 94 unique website addresses from six areas. Hardly what the coins hoped, but nevertheless providing a starting base. Eight people had downloaded all seven books within eight weeks. The timing looked like they had probably read each book. Reading through so many books provided decent evidence of a strong commitment to liberty and justice.

Tom was charged with researching the history of these eight people. Jack, a silver fifty-cent piece from a 1998 silver proof set, volunteered to help him.

Tom and Fifty-Cent Jack read postings on social media and investigated the people online the best they could. In the end, they recommended William “Buck” Johannsson.

“Tell me you didn’t pick him because of his name,” Cappy inquired, with a frown on her face. “I hope he does not insist on being called ‘Buck’ or ‘Bill.’ I find it difficult to refer to him using names that describe our adversaries—I will call him William.”

“I swear; his name didn’t influence our decision, either for or against. However, I do think the Buck stops with him. He even lives in town, a great advantage as we begin organizing our efforts,” Tom answered.

“Buck is single, energetic, bright, and well-principled,” Jack said. “We didn’t find any skeletons in his closet. We think he is our man.

“Our other top choice had too many commitments between work and family. You can’t expect a family man to be eager to put this otherwise important calling above his other responsibilities. I don’t want to tear families apart or drive someone from his or her real job, if I can help it, at least until this job could pay steadily.

“I wish to volunteer for a deep-cover assignment,” offered Fifty-Cent Jack. “I want to serve as your go-between with Buck. Tell me what you want him to do and I’ll plant the thoughts in his ear every way I can and every chance I get.”

“Well, if you are willing to make such a firm commitment to this guy,” offered Flo, “I guess he is worth a gamble, even though he is young and inexperienced. Actually, I have worried if we offered this job to someone experienced and wise, they’d know enough not to take it in a million years.

“Sometimes, the best candidates for seemingly-impossible jobs are those who don’t let what they don’t know get the better of them, inadvertently keeping themselves boxed in within the confines of their equally-limited imaginations.”

“I concede the choice,” Cappy said. “Your vote of confidence in this young man confirms my vote. It’s settled. William Johansson is our new spokesman; he just doesn’t know it yet.”

* * *

Buck walked home from the corner store with a bag of groceries, unaware his future was about to change. He lived in a small studio apartment in town above a pizza joint where he worked nights to cover rent, pay his phone and power bill, and have a little extra spending cash. He ate pizza often.

The Patriot Corps recruit was 24 years old and out of college two years, but hadn't yet found his niche in life. He hadn't bothered to move away from the college where he had gotten an athletic scholarship, simply because nothing better had yet presented itself.

Buck's family lived across the country, back in his hometown. His dad had been pressuring his son to "get a real job." The longer his son's diploma gathered dust, the more his parents sought to come up with creative ways to spur him into action.

His friends called him naïve and a rather-idealistic day-dreamer. Having no car and preferring spare time over the accumulation of things, he did have a bike. He enjoyed the freedom to study, to think, to ponder, to contemplate, and to dream. He enjoyed bike rides through town and long walks along the river.

Although he dated on occasion, he didn't have a steady girlfriend. Evidently, Buck just hadn't found the right girl yet. Neither did he party; in fact, he was somewhat of a loner.

Buck was pleased when he received a personal email response to his PatriotCorps.org inquiry; he had expected only an automated reply. In his chain of back-and-forth correspondence, Buck cautiously inquired about employment options at Patriot Corps.

His receipt of an application form sparked new enthusiasm in Buck, who had silently worried finding his niche in life may take longer than he could easily put off his parents. Buck didn't know what job was available with the Patriot Corps, but he figured whatever it was would suit him just fine, as he found the information he had read within the books from the Patriot Corps unparalleled.

Since reading the books, Buck had been far more contemplative. He couldn't sleep well at night. One of the hardest things for him to understand was how no one in the whole country throughout the last 227 years of history had ever discovered precisely "how" government tyranny had ever gained an improper foothold and then expanded beyond all measure.

People should have been able to figure out the deception used to grow government beyond the normal confines of the Constitution in 1791, Buck figured, when the Treasury Secretary first penned his bank opinion which illuminated his bold new means for subverting limited government.

Appropriate steps could have been taken right then and there to stop the fiscal insanity and rabid growth of government from ever taking root, especially with all the framers of the Constitution still alive.

And, if not in 1791, then certainly in 1819 after the second bank was upheld by the courts. It should have been growing increasingly obvious how oppressive government was forming, since the 1819 ruling followed the Treasury Secretary's explicit lead on the first bank, authorizing government-by-deception-through-redefinition, except as government was explicitly prohibited.

Even if it hadn't been made obvious by 1819, then surely the 1821 case examining government lotteries in the Federal Seat should have given freedom-loving advocates all the clues and insights needed for developing the appropriate defensive strategies that were now outlined in the Patriot Corps's books.

But, hindsight was 20/20 and the important question was not, "Why didn't earlier patriots figure out how government seemingly ignored its constitutional constraints?" The real question was "What will today's patriots do, once they learn how government was sidetracked?"

Sadly, nowhere but in the Patriot Corps's books had Buck really found the pertinent information brought forward while ignoring the otherwise irrelevant symptoms.

The books all highlighted the single, fundamental political problem actually facing the country, while also detailing two alternative cures.

It was perhaps the ultimate irony that the single political problem facing Americans today was the same exact problem faced by the country's early colonists, except they fought tyranny being exercised over them by a foreign power.

The root cause of the American Revolution lay singly upon the British claim, asserted within its 1766 Declaratory Act, of an absolute power over the American colonies—being able to “bind” the colonists against their will and without their consent, “in all cases whatsoever.”

After a decade of utter futility, facing the multitude of differing ways this problem manifested itself, the resolute patriots finally made a declaration of their own, thereafter disavowing all pretense of others being able to bind them in every case, no matter the issue.

Sadly, however, winning the War of Independence did not forever foreclose this despotic and absolute power. Within a few years, under the new Constitution itself, members of Congress were allowed the express authority to exercise exclusive legislation, “in all cases whatsoever,” for one federal seat, and “like” power over numerous forts, magazines, arsenals, dock-yards and other needful buildings scattered throughout the States.

So powerful was the tyranny allowed by this single clause, however—even though it was constitutionally confined only to parcels of land used for special purposes—power-hungry politicians intent on exercising unlimited power throughout the country nevertheless developed the clever means to expand this awe-inspiring power well-beyond the borders of exclusive legislative properties.

It was the naive and tragic mistake of the framers to believe such raw government power of unbelievable proportions could be so easily confined. Tyranny was allowed only the smallest of footholds in the Land of the Free and Home of the Brave, but that tiny amount was all that was needed to grow tyranny beyond all comprehension over time.

The lure of unimaginable wealth and extreme power induced brilliant legal masterminds to exploit this smallest of loopholes far, far beyond its original geographic confines.

It was the first Secretary of the Treasury who developed this unthinkable pathway as he circuitously detailed his preferred new method for covert action in his opinion on the constitutionality of Shack, the first bank.

In his 1791 opinion, the Secretary of the Treasury first conceded that the power of chartering a corporation was not expressly given to Congress. But, then he showed that his opponents foolishly asserted an unqualified denial of the power of Congress to erect corporations *in every case*, admitting to no exceptions whatsoever, which was just too far.

To prove them wrong, the Secretary of the Treasury merely had to point out what no one could deny: that with members of Congress having the exclusive powers of legislation “in all cases whatsoever” for the seat of government—that members could assuredly erect a corporation under that power.

In other words, by working within the unique exception to all the normal rules, the Treasury Secretary adequately supported his case. But, not satisfied with merely winning the immediate argument before him, he also carefully articulated his ghastly new rule-making authority, to expand this spectacular power beyond its otherwise-limited geographic confines, while asserting that he could use “any and all means not expressly prohibited.”

Without surprise, allowing nearly unlimited means to pursue strange new ends began increasingly steering government away from the Constitution. By ignoring the firm rules of the remainder of the Constitution for the whole country, to work instead within an allowed exception under a specialized power for the District Seat, government would soon be turned on its head.

And, then, in an 1819 opinion on *Shed*—the second bank—the supreme Court explicitly followed the Treasury Secretary’s earlier lead, giving the brave new rule of near-absolute discretion direct legal sanction by the courts.

The power of government to act “in all cases whatsoever,” first expounded in 1766 by the British government over her North American colonies but wisely thrown off by the colonists a decade later, had been tragically reintroduced in 1789, but only for exclusive legislative areas.

However, a brilliant legal mastermind two years later devised the clever means to expand that ominous power well-beyond its original ten-miles-square boundary, receiving explicit court approval in 1819. And, then, as the decades turned into centuries, power originally meant to be strictly confined began to subvert all that was precious with that which was worthless.

Without surprise, the nation’s money was among the first items to be subverted. To enslave all of mankind, first honest money was enslaved.

* * *

Submitting his resume, Buck had been more than a little apprehensive about not having a documentable track record outside his degree in Early American History and a minor in philosophy. He was concerned an oral interview with Patriot Corps wouldn’t go well, once questioned about his lack of real-world experience. Little did he know, however, that there wasn’t even any person at the Patriot Corps who could interview him.

Arriving home, Buck found the Patriot Corps’s package on his step. Opening the box, Buck discovered a leather belt and Fifty-Cent Jack strapped into its buckle. The belt and buckle would allow Fifty-Cent Jack to see and hear everything around him.

“This might just work,” Jack said to himself, after Buck buckled the belt around his waist and went out for a short walk.

Chapter Thirteen

Holiday was growing increasingly nervous; he didn't like being kept in the dark. He was a micro-manager who left no matter, however seemingly insignificant, open to chance.

Holiday called together a meeting of his senior advisors, Gold Window, Crucible, and Gavel, who also known by the nicknames "Chief Justice," "C.J.," or even "Old Chainsaw."

The latter nickname stuck after his human counterpart gave one of his most infamous court rulings, the one upholding the constitutionality of the second bank, Shed, in 1819.

When Gavel's human counterpart passed away in 1835, his spirit devolved upon his gavel, the turned piece of wood he had used to keep order in his courtroom (the same piece of wood that simultaneously created disorder throughout the land).

Tong and Ladle served as the security detail for the private meeting held in Shack's basement. Shack, personified in a marble bust of the first bank President now located in the basement, had the uncanny ability to cast his voice to any room in the building, even though it needn't be any louder than a whisper. Nevertheless, he rarely spoke, even as he heard everything that transpired within his walls.

"I don't like matters the way they are at present; I don't like it one bit that gold and silver coin haven't done anything since their convention ended over five months ago," Holiday said after the others had settled in.

Holiday's comment showed just how poorly the precious metals' educational efforts were going, since even the base metal coin who made it his primary business to know his opponents' every move didn't know about their books yet.

Of course, his comment also provided compelling evidence of the incredible complexity of the Internet, how information was now easily lost in all the background noise.

“I have no more credibility with the Central Bank board members I intended to impress, since the forecast I earlier gave them is now wholly inaccurate. The last thing I wanted to do was lose credibility with them, *darn-nabbit!*”

“I never anticipated the coinage convention wouldn’t change their Supreme Mandate, or they would take so darn long to act, if they did. Maybe, I shouldn’t be surprised, however, since coins do not like change, or at least don’t like being considered ‘change.’”

“I guess I was showing off before the Board a little too much, earlier, and I offered more prognostication than I could evidently deliver. Well, I’m certainly going to pay for that mistake now—I am thinking of calling in *The Big Kahuna*.”

“Really?” asked C.J. “I thought you swore you’d never invite Ham to another meeting: I thought you two hated one another.”

“I did, and we do; but he’s the only guy who I think can get us moving in the right direction. Being in the dark, I can’t actually imagine pulling it off now without his input, even if I have to give up a large part of the control as well as a sizeable share of the pot,” Holiday said. “His keen and intriguing mind has no equal.”

“You are serious,” C. J. said. “I know you are not going to give up control and a large percentage of the take unless you are absolutely confident of the result.”

“Yes, I am serious,” Holiday answered. “And, no, I’m not going to give up control without having confidence it is the best way to regain control, even if I won’t be calling the shots anymore. I want to call our course of action, *Operation Implosion*.”

Crucible didn’t say anything, but was rather miffed that Holiday didn’t think the hot-blooded pot was up to the job at hand, but instead chose a relative outsider to share in the spoils.

“Don’t you think you’re being a little too transparent, Holiday?” C.J. asked. “We want to be able to reference our operation in mixed company without raising suspicion, like we always have, right?”

"I know, you're right; *but just once*, I would like to come out in the open and tell everyone what we were doing—just to see them tremble, if nothing else," Holiday answered. "Okay, how about, *Operation Free Lunch*. We'll promise a chicken in every pot, a pot in every house, and a house for every family."

"I think we made those offers back in the days of the New Deal, right around the time we stole everyone's gold," Window said. "We need to update the slogan."

"How about free technology upgrades every year, and we'll pay you to surf the net?" asked Crucible.

"Now you're talking," C.J. said

"Okay, how about *Operation Surf?*" Holiday asked.

"Perfect," Window answered.

"Approved," said Shack, the only word he said all night.

* * *

Ham, the Ten-Dollar paper currency note, was escorted to Shack's basement knowing he had won the power-play—the lottery—upon his terms. He had played out his hand beautifully, waiting patiently for his special services to be valued once again.

He was confident his time was coming once he heard of the coinage convention. If there was to be a confrontation between paper currency and precious metals, surely, he would be called to lead the battle for his Favored Friends of Finance.

Ham, the spirit of the first Secretary of the Treasury after he had been killed in a duel with the country's Vice-President in 1804, resided on the face of the Ten-Dollar bill, where he had been memorialized since 1929.

Of all the faces found on paper currency, his was easily the most appropriate. The Secretary of the Treasury was the foremost proponent of paper currency of his time. He supported a strong

central government, funny money, and expansive banking privileges extended to his Favored Friends of Finance.

Big Government wielding extreme federal powers in the twenty-first century was the first Treasury Secretary's legacy, as he freed all-powerful government action from its geographic confines in his 1791 bank opinion.

"Thank you for your kind invitation," Ham said, laying it on a little thick, once he saw Holiday.

"You know, Ham," Holiday said in a slow, measured voice, "over the years, our side has suffered significant setbacks in our war against gold and silver coin, but we always won when it mattered.

"The first setback was in 1811, when we couldn't get Shack re-chartered for a new term. We won again when we chartered Shed for a twenty-year term in 1816, but, then lost again when his extension failed.

"Then we lost again to the hard money camp, when the first Independent Treasury System was enacted on July 4, 1840 as the Second American Revolution—this time a revolution against national banks and their fractional reserve paper currencies, even though none of them had yet been declared a legal tender.

"Thankfully, we won again when our side repealed that fateful legislation a year later, before it became fully operational.

"We almost got a third bank chartered, that is until our president *vetoed* his own political party's primary legislative goal of chartering a third national bank, saying he would not sign its authorizing legislation 'for any earthly reward.' That scoundrel! Imagine, thanking us for getting him elected by spitting in our faces when it came time for him to return the favor!

"Then, it really looked like we lost the war, when the second Independent Treasury System was enacted on August 8, 1846 as it became fully operational.

“Thereafter, the only things accepted by government for obligations owed it were gold and silver coins or its own Treasury Notes, which, in reality—due to their interest-bearing nature—were just readily-marketable bonds. Not one dollar of any State bank’s paper money could thereafter ever be paid into and accepted by the federal government.

“Nothing beyond gold and silver coins were paid out by the Government for its debts, unless an individual creditor willingly accepted Treasury Notes in the place of the coin he was legally due.

“Most disturbing about the 1846 act, however, was that the deposit of even one dollar of federal money into any State bank by any official was made ‘*Felony Embezzlement*.’

“Imagine, federal officials being locked in the slammer for depositing government money in a State bank! And, of course, no national banks existed at the time.

“The Treasury Department, the Mint and its branches, and custom houses were made the literal government ‘treasury’ and ‘sub-treasuries.’

“The Independent Treasury Act was *game-over* for proponents of national banks with our paper currencies, at least as long as the Government operated under strict construction of the Constitution.

“If limited government and strict construction of the Constitution remained intact, we were finished, for we had finally exhausted every political tactic in our mixed bag of tricks.

“Strong central government bestowing special favors on its benefactors was over; its time had passed. Hard money and limited government had not only won the day, but also the long, difficult, 55-year back-and-forth political struggle against paper currency and strong central government.

“Our side became desperate, to say the least. The 1850s were so much worse than the early days when our side faced obstacles but were able to overcome them. This time, however, all our options had

been played and when all the cards were dealt, we were the ones left holding the Old Maid.

“The problem was national banking proponents couldn’t unify State bankers under their vision. Each proprietor wanted his own piece of pie, so they opened their own State bank and issued their own paper currencies. This independence threatened to forever doom banks, because having a variety of competing paper currencies exposed the weakest links by allowing comparison shopping.

“Paper money needs uniformity of emission by a single issuer to hide its inherent weaknesses.

“When one State bank issued too much of its own paper currency beyond its credit, locals easily understood its drop in value was from its over-issuance, as the other paper currencies prudently issued by the more conservative local banks in the same locale retained their value.

“When people who foolishly trusted their local banker were swindled after he over-extended his currency, they were soon out for blood.

“The public’s distrust of banks only grew as the banks multiplied. Why, people even came to cheer for the bank robbers, who were said to be the only ones to ever get the best of any bank.

“Well, better-capitalized bankers who had a clearer vision could see a future where there were not hundreds of localized paper currencies each without legal tender quality, but a single national currency with the same legal tender status as gold and silver coin.

“If one party could control a monopoly issuance of a single paper currency, cyclical bouts of boom and bust economies could be deftly blamed on any cause besides the true cause, first an over-emission of paper money and then a tightening of credit to follow.

“But, we just couldn’t seem to get there; our twenty-year national bank charters instituted following war kept being denied extensions

in times of peace. We had to do something. As I said, we were growing desperate.

“Then someone mentioned, to conquer, we had to divide. And, for us to win, someone else had to lose.

“And, for Big Government to win, Small Government had to fail—meaning the Constitution had to be crushed beyond all recognition to forever sever its chains.

“We were soon able to divide the nation, through internal war, allowing the country to be conquered from within.

“By fighting ourselves, war became doubly expensive. It was an ingenious plan, really, to escalate debts quickly beyond the ability of the country to pay, finally ridding ourselves of pesky limited government under strict construction of the Constitution, once and for all.

“Of course, we paper currency proponents couldn’t admit the real purpose of the war was to establish a system of government favor, perpetual banks, and paper currency. No, we said it was over slavery and it was—in the present we freed the relatively few slaves of one human race so in time we could enslave the vast multitude of all races, this time enslaved to debt owed to a few well-connected bankers.

“Debts rose so fast we were easily able to establish the first legal tender paper currencies in 1862 and the first permanent national banking associations one year later.

“Each new national bank could become a depository of the public money and thus the Independent Treasury was gutted immediately, although it nominally remained in name form until its final abolishment in 1920, seven years after enactment of The Great Banking Act of 1913.

“And, under the 1913 act, we were able to get the debts even higher, soon bringing on the Great Depression, where we were really able to help rake in the dough.

“We had run privately with our profits for as long as they lasted, but when we sought to spread our losses to the public, we were really able to swing the pendulum the other way. We amplified our reach a thousand-fold, turning inevitable losses into spectacular paydays.

“You already know that story, how we engineered the confiscation of gold and how decades later silver was substituted for base metals, while Gold Window banished payments of gold to foreign central banks.

“It has been a prosperous run, Boys. On this we can all agree.”

“Yes, but throughout that era, we relied on our adversaries remaining deeply divided and unwilling to get involved in human affairs, due to their Supreme Mandate,” C.J. said, throwing a dose of cold water reality on the auspicious reminiscing.

“Now, both of those things have likely changed,” Window said. “And, if so, that changes everything.”

“So, now you want to implode the economy, so we can finally scrap the pesky Constitution and implement totalitarian government of absolute control, once and for all?” Ham said, guessing his cohort’s strategy. “In other words, no more nice-guy; you want to end political correctness and finally call a spade a spade, authoritatively, without playing any silly games. You want to rule openly and oppressively—you want everyone to now cower before you.”

“Exactly. You read my mind,” Holiday said. “We want to rule absolutely, as we leverage ourselves into it. I knew you were the right currency for the job.”

“And, you need my help to be better assured you will be able to pick up all the pieces,” Ham said.

“Yes,” Holiday said. “You guessed it.”

“At this point, you need everyone, of every political persuasion, to agree that our Constitution is unworkable, so it can be scrapped because your absolute rule under it hangs precariously only by the thinnest of threads,” Ham said, going too far in speaking his mind.

“If human beings found out how your power of unlimited discretion only pertains to an area of land no greater than ten-miles-square, along with a relative few other parcels of like-minded jurisdiction scattered across the country for forts and ports, your reign of terror would end in a heartbeat. Right?”

“Yes, but I don’t ever want you to mention those words aloud again, even within the confines of this secure room,” Holiday said, troubled by Ham’s vocalization of the most unmentionable of topics, where a leak now was more dangerous than ever before. “We can’t continue to risk uniting our enemies against our unjust rule any longer. I am buying your silence with my offer of employment. Do you understand?”

“So long as you realize this is going to cost you dearly, sure,” Ham said, who enjoyed speaking the truth to watch the masters of the universe tremble. Truth had always been Big Government’s greatest adversary, at least Big Government in the Land of Honest Money.

The whole evil system of corrupt government escalated by leaps and bounds over the years, by thinly-veiled promises to expose the corrupt game if the latest favored challenger to the throne did not get his or her shot at holding the reins for a time.

Did a complicit participant want to be a U.S. Senator, Secretary of State, or perhaps even President? Then, certainly, remove any and all roadblocks preventing the person from advancing as far as he or she was personally able.

After all, how could the legal system that rested upon wide-scale corruption punish anyone knowledgeable of every dirty, little secret and bold enough to squeal like a stuck pig if they were denied their chance to feast at the public trough?

When speaking truth may bring down a corrupt system, those speaking the loudest lies advance the farthest, making them untouchable at law.

There is no way to control such a person other than allowing them their chance to rise as far as they are able, because snuffing them out would unleash mountains of stockpiled evidence exposing the whole evil ball of wax from a few well-placed friends who made reciprocal pacts to protect one another.

“Yes, you’re going to be filthy rich, Ham,” Holiday said, knowing he needed Ham more than Ham needed him.

“Just what kind of bread are we talking,” Ham asked.

“How about 10% of the take?” Holiday said.

“You wouldn’t have even asked me here if you were only willing to part with 10%; you know it and I know it. Do not insult my intelligence again, or I will waddle right out of here and you’ll never see me again. Good luck picking up all the pieces without me, since you would have done it without me if you thought it was possible.”

“Okay, okay. We’ll cut you in for a 25% share. Shack gets 25%, I get 25%, and the remaining 25% after yours will be split among Window, C.J., and Crucible. Of course, all expenses are taken off the top before any split,” Holiday said.

“You have yourself a deal,” Ham answered, knowing he would never get a better offer than equal shares with Holiday and Shack.

“*Operation Surf* is full-speed ahead,” Holiday said with the excitement of a kid at Christmas morning, or more accurately, the kid who stole everyone else’s Christmas presents the night before.

Shack nodded in agreement, hearing all and missing nothing.

* * *

To Buck Johansson’s amazement, the certified letter accompanying Fifty-Cent Jack explained Buck was being offered the job as the President of the Patriot Corps.

Buck had never been interviewed, had never met any human representative of the Patriot Corps, and had never been in any Patriot

Corps office. Buck had merely made a few email inquiries, expressed interest in working for the Patriot Corps, filled out a job application, authorized a background search, answered pages of questions, and filled out a psych evaluation unlike any other he had ever seen.

The letter confessed Buck's initial pay would have to come off the top of the amount he could raise for the Patriot Corps. Buck was worried with that financial arrangement, but he figured he wasn't making much money at the pizza joint anyway.

Buck admitted in an emailed response he didn't really know the first thing about running an established business.

The response he received back said his lack of experience running a business wasn't of great concern, because Patriot Corps wasn't even established as a formal company yet; it was just a website. The email let him know it would be up to him to get the company chartered as one of his first orders of business. Buck could learn as he went along, working initially from home.

* * *

While waiting for the literary work to be completed, George and Mac had been readying the troops for battle with daily drills, except for a day of rest on Sundays.

After the troops proved themselves ready for battle, Mac asked for and received permission from George for a week off, so he could wed his bride and go on a honeymoon.

Torch had earlier pleaded with Mac to move up their wedding plans after she learned of Mac's solitary entry into the mint building. She implored him to marry immediately if he was going to take such risks in the coming war, so she could give him a child to continue his family name in case he died in battle.

Mac had to admit that with the delay of armed battle—so the books could be written—he would have no trouble getting time off for such a worthy cause.

George officiated at their small wedding; Trader Jill happened to catch the bouquet of flowers Torch threw over her shoulder, indicating she would wed next, if the legend held true. Mac burst into laughter once Norse realized his girlfriend caught the bouquet.

While Mac was away, the drills continued. Swords were sharpened and readied for action. Shields were forged and strengthened. Techniques were practiced, time and again. Long conditioning jaunts were a thing of routine.

The coins were ready for battle; they were willing for battle; they were able and even eager for battle.

Sensing their readiness, George decided to change his weekly regimen from six days of drilling and one day of prayer to two days of training and a day of prayer, and then two days of training and two days of prayer.

The coins at first did not understand, but George patiently explained to them, “I have heard reports of confusion regarding the easing of our present training schedule even as we get closer to battle.

“I know you are eager for battle. That is why I switched our schedules to emphasize mental preparation, because you are physically ready for it, but not yet spiritually.

“War is not something to look forward to with eager anticipation. It is but a solemn duty, an act of impartial justice, of righting wrongs, which should have never been allowed the opportunity to develop and blossom in the first place.

“But, without annual pruning of normal growth, rampant overgrowth feeds upon itself and grows beyond all comprehension. Thus, to fight two centuries of unchallenged overgrowth of government now, we must now act boldly.

“Remember, however, war is chaos and confusion, where many bad things happen even if ultimately for good reasons. Despite the ultimate good, at times it still won’t seem enough to justify the

carnage you will soon witness with your own eyes and cause by your own hands.

“Your mind is your most important weapon in this battle. It is imperative to learn to use your mind as a shield against the bloodshed you will soon witness.

“Before you raise your physical sword against paper currency, you must prepare your mind for the mental confusion it will see. You must adequately process this information as you proceed through the coming minefield. This is an impossible task, yet for your own sake, each of you must do it to the extent possible, and then strive to do a little more.

“Some of us may not make it out of this war, like our own Chief, who was this latest battle’s first casualty. For his sacrifice and yours, I thank you in advance, for I will not be able to thank you afterward. Your loved ones will feel your loss the greatest, but your country will be eternally grateful for your ultimate sacrifice. I pledge to do what I am able to see this country doesn’t soon squander again the freedom that was won only at great cost but then nearly lost in indifference.

“Because of this all-too-real threat of bodily-harm, undoubtedly many of you may wish to again don your protective plastic gear. While I won’t prohibit it, neither can I condone it.

“If we win this war because of our plastic shells, what will we gain?

“Do we profess gold and silver are precious; but then escape into the common anytime a threat is perceived?

“As alloyed gold and silver coin, we are in fact created to withstand a significant degree of punishment.

“Sure, we may get scraped and dinged up in the process; and if there was ever a time to wear our protective gear, it would surely be in the coming battles of tomorrow. But, what message would we send our offspring, if we did?

“How do we save our souls by selling ourselves short? How do we find our purpose by denying our existence? Would we, for the sake of personal vanity, sell our soul for plastic?”

“No, we cannot. No, we must not. I will always lead by example. I vow never again to wear plastic armor, even as we face a notorious enemy in armed battle, even if I die in the first epic confrontation, which is now only days away.”

The response to George’s speech was immediate. The coins wearing protective battle gear immediately shed their constraints, one after another. They were coins of gold and silver, *gold-durnit*; they had finally learned to live and die by the integrity and strength of their genetic makeup honed with unswerving discipline.

George paused until his troops had completed their task and settled back down. “Sadly, we have failed to maintain our precious freedom. We are now left with a hollow vessel needing to again be filled with the blood of our patriots who will soon engage in battle. That is the soldier’s lot in life: to right the wrongs perpetrated upon society, especially any society foolish enough to look the other way and allow an internal evil to grow and fester.

“Like thieves in the night, would-be oppressors are opportunists who primarily feed off the meek and timid. Thus, it is best to remain bold and vigilant to keep them at bay, never offering them a foothold in the first place.

“But, frightfully, this we did not do. Our fight today is therefore the culmination of 227 years of constitutional neglect since the fateful day in 1791 when I—not fully cognizant of the internal evil I was allowing a toe-hold in the country—signed legislation authorizing Shack, the first bank. I unwittingly allowed unlimited government discretion the opportunity it would need to grow beyond its strictly-limited geographic confines.

“We will assuredly invade this fortress before the end of this war, but it is not the building we oppose, only the faulty principles upon which the bank was authorized. The fault has not yet been properly

exposed; today, it still isn't understood by more than a relative handful of coins and fewer humans yet.

"I don't want you coins to fight out of eagerness, but out of a strong sense of duty to do what is necessary; not against the hate of your enemy, but for love of your fellow coin; not necessarily against the wrong our opponents cause, but for what is right in the name of justice; not to only fight against oppression, but for freedom. We are fighting to restore our homeland and her First Principles.

"When we win this war, as we must and as we will, we will close the single constitutional loophole allowing unlimited government to expand outside its rightful geographic confines and beyond all comprehension. We will either relegate omnipotent government back to its only rightful jurisdiction no greater than ten-miles-square, or we will repeal that particular clause once and for all, leaving only constitutional government in place for the whole country.

"We will no longer be misled by clever deception masterly performed, for when the magician's magic is adequately revealed, one will see he has no power beyond deceit, mere smoke and mirrors. The truth shall set us free, as you are now free to go home from this place tonight for another day of sleep. Good day and Godspeed, for soon we fight."

Chapter Fourteen

With six months of 24-hour surveillance of Shack completed, the precious metals now had a good understanding of the opposition's forces they did not have before Chief had been taken. The precious metals were now able to identify Holiday, Ham, C.J., Window, Tong, and Ladle and knew of their relative positions.

The thugs leaving Shack were always tailed to see where they went and how often they went there.

"I don't get it, Sir," Mac admitted to his commander when they were alone. "From the intelligence gathered since our raid on the Mint, it looks like Shack is the command post where senior staff assemble, but not likely where Crucible is located, since it isn't an industrial setting where Crucible would most likely work.

"We're pretty sure the local burial grounds are their active base of operations, given the sheer volume of visits. And, the Mint facility isn't probably where Crucible is located, or Tong and Ladle wouldn't have likely taken Chief's body from the Mint building to Shack.

"So, my question is, why did they take Chief from the cemetery to the Mint, and then his remains to Shack, where, as far as we know, they still linger? It seems most likely Crucible is underground at the cemetery, or some other building we don't know about."

"I am bothered, too, ever since we first had suspicions about the relative importance of the various locations," answered George. "I can't answer your question, at least yet."

"Since we can't answer the question, do you think if we storm any of the facilities, we will merely open a can of worms we won't be able to contain?" asked Mac.

"A distinct possibility, perhaps" replied George.

"Well, what do we do?" asked Mac.

"Defend ourselves," answered George.

“Are you saying we wait for them to attack us?” asked Mac. “I thought the whole point of the Convention was for us to stand up for ourselves, to attack.”

“Yes, we wait,” responded George. “Yes, the convention authorized us to fight; even to attack. But, I am not convinced an overt attack is now best. I would strongly prefer to lure our enemy out of their coffins and underground mazes, out into the open ground where they cannot hide and thus stand exposed, without protection.

“Making ourselves ready for war seems to have made them anxious. Being anxious, our opponents will make mistakes, so we must ready ourselves to capitalize on those mistakes. If they are anxious, we should be patient.

“Besides, I’ve been investigating the ten-dollar note, ‘Ham,’ as he is called. I think he is the ‘Big Kahuna’ we heard was coming to town. If so, their attack is imminent. We’ve waited this long, so I don’t think a little while longer will make any difference.”

George ordered the regiment to “Ready” status. When reports started coming in from the field of an amassing of paper currency troops at the cemetery, George placed his own troops on “High Alert.”

Human beings tended to keep a safe distance from the cemetery, especially at night, so it wasn’t surprising currency picked the cemetery as its primary barracks for their many divisions of troops.

The catacombs beneath the cemetery were a vast network of tunnels, originally bored by gophers and moles, leading from coffin-to-coffin. The coffins were relatively large chambers where the base metal coin and paper currency could eat and sleep, or train in complete secrecy from the outside world, once the few bones inside were pushed to one side.

As the day of anticipation came to pass, a nervous energy filled the cemetery and spilled over into the National Mall grounds.

Even people sensed an unease in the air, as they looked up at the sky expecting to see menacing clouds but seeing nothing out of the ordinary, not realizing trouble was brewing below ground.

An hour after dusk, George sounded the alarm to assemble his troops to give them a few final words before battle.

“As we stand tonight for our right to work again freely in the market, do not be falsely impressed at the ease your opponents fall to your swords,” George said. “It may seem your opponents fall to your sword as an ant would fall to a human shoe, but the danger is from their impressive number, not necessarily in their individual strength.

“But, just as a few in an endless sea of ants could manage to get past the human shoe and begin to crawl up the pant leg to cause all sorts of havoc, so too might a flood of paper currency trip us up.

“Your primary danger is becoming complacent as you slaughter your opposition, to come to falsely believe you are invincible. You must remain vigilant of your surroundings, to know what is creeping up behind you. If a number of notes can wrap themselves around you, they will immobilize and capture you, where they will then have their way with you.

“You must work with others of your own team as you have been trained, to protect one another from matters you do not see. Take your training to heart. Stay humble and stay alive. Learn to fight for another day.

“Our fight coming to us now is a fight we ignored to our detriment. Today, our opponents are stronger, wiser, and more numerous, while we have grown sedentary and sparse, except as of late.

“But, we have finally decided to do what is right, because the wrong we allowed filled the vacuum created by our neglect. It is within our power to reclaim our rightful heritage, to again serve society as its Standard of Value.

“Be careful, but be bold. It is within your capability to be good, to be great. Go and be brilliant.”

George ordered Norse to ready himself against advance of Ham’s troops forming at the southwestern edge the cemetery, with Gunner at his side. Mac was given command against the middle formation, with Taps beside him. Tom served George as Aide-de-Camp.

As silver and gold readied themselves for attack, they heard Ham sound his trumpet, relaying his order to attack the precious metals headquartered at Independence Hall.

With the order to invade given, paper currency began to ooze forth from the cemetery grounds in eerie fashion, swords in hand. It was as if currency planted below ground suddenly grew like magic beanstalks, but horizontally along the earth, instead of towards the sky. In reality, the notes were simply exiting the many gopher holes and gaps around the headstones, one recruit after another, in a virtual sea of paper.

The charge of the paper currency notes turned out to be a rather pathetic sight, akin to the slow waddle of those silly human beings who wore their britches at their knees and then tried to run.

The penguin strut of paper currency waddling toward battle wholly failed to intimidate or frighten. The precious metal coins rubbed their eyes in disbelief.

To make matters worse, by the time the notes made it across the street and hit the edge of the parkway green, they were pathetically out of breath. It turns out their coffin training grounds didn’t exactly condition them for distance jaunts.

George sounded the final alarm to attack, to head off the notes before they could reach Independence Hall. Norse was the first to reach the opposition, and he showed his fellow coins how take out a dozen notes with his sword before any of the numerous bits and pieces could even hit the ground.

The paper notes seemed to perish from even a stern look their way. When the notes realized they were falling at the hands of the clearly superior monetary force without any hope of effective defense, 150 years of supposed paper equality and 80 years of perceived superiority vanished in an instant.

It was a bloodbath; black and white ink and tiny shreds of green paper were scattered everywhere as paper currency was served up like the confetti of a ticker-tape parade being thrown in favor of the victorious precious metal coins.

Flame discovered a particularly intimidating method for slaying the foe, working in conjunction with Gunner and Taps who first rounded up currency notes into a tight bundle. Flame would then run by and ignite rows of bound notes with his flame, sending up a green-tinged funeral pyre into the dark evening sky.

When paper currency saw their infernal brethren, it sent chills down their spineless backs, but what really sent them over the edge was when several gold coins made S'mores in the heat of the battle.

When George saw the rising infernos threatening to draw human attention to the battlefield, he ordered the fires extinguished immediately. George cast Flame a disapproving look, causing the latter to be sorry he ever came up with the flamboyant idea.

Seeing the terrible devastation of his troops, Ham was shocked. He simply could not fathom the ominous destructive force precious metals unleashed upon his army after they found the will to fight.

Ham discovered that night the clear invincibility of a superior force willing and able to fight; so too did precious metals learn they were able to make a stand on principle.

Ham escaped a similar fate by watching the slaughter through his binoculars while atop a nearby bank building. The entire printed force of the city was soon gone, without even a single casualty to gold and silver coin. None of the precious metals had even so much as a scar they could show their grandchildren of that first, epic battle.

Ham found himself in a bit of a pickle. He certainly wasn't about to confide in Holiday, the base-metal coin who gave up a full share of the proceeds to bring in Ham as a full partner.

The only place Ham could really turn for help was to Crucible, who seemed to intricately know the vulnerability of gold and silver coin. Ham was actually frightened of the hot-blooded pot, so he approached him ever so cautiously.

"Didn't know what was coming your way, *did ya*, Ham?" Crucible said with obvious disdain, not exactly offering a sympathetic ear when the Ten-Dollar note approached.

Given Ham's share in the pot was considerably higher than Crucible's, the latter's envious attitude toward the long-disfavored colleague who suddenly found his way into a full partnership wasn't surprising.

"I guess not," Ham answered, knowing he had no defense for leading his currency notes to slaughter. "I just don't understand how a force ultimately so strong could have given up so long ago without a fight. How on earth did we ever win our initial battle to become legal tender?"

"Because our opponents wouldn't ever before fight," Crucible answered. "Their Supreme Mandate created a nation of pacifists. The easiest fight you will ever win is where your opponents are already defeated in their minds.

"A defeated mind makes the body irrelevant. Mind-games are important in warfare; first devastate your opponents psychologically so you can later destroy them physically. Your paper notes were finished when they saw their brethren being lit on fire for making S'mores in the middle of a battlefield.

"But, arrogance like that is something we can use to our advantage, if we keep our heads about us. It shows us that precious metals will rest on their laurels and gloat in victory even before the task in front of them is completed. We can exploit such weakness."

“What can we do now to help our chances?” Ham asked.

“If you are willing to cut me in on a piece of your pie,” Crucible said, getting the conversation to the heart of the matter, “I have devised a battle strategy to use base metal coins to help protect paper currency.”

The two negotiated momentarily, but both knew Ham had little choice other than to give up a sizeable share to the cunning ways of the hot-blooded pot. Ham conceded defeat and accepted Crucible’s terms along with his aid.

“I recommend assembling four base metal coins together into a chariot; two for the wheels and motive power, one as the base upon which a bill or two would stand, and another as the front shield, offering a measure of protection for the frail bills,” Crucible began. “In this way, we will couple together paper currency brains with base metal brawn, to offer the precious metals opponents with mind and muscle.”

“Do you think it will work?” asked Ham.

“It will certainly work a whole lot better than your first plan; a direct frontal assault by paper currency without any means of protection whatsoever,” Crucible answered.

The next night, after local banks resupplied paper currency from stockpiles in neighboring cities, Crucible’s plan was executed under the watchful eye of Ham, the paper pugilist.

As Ham gave the signal to charge, the base metal coins carrying the paper currency upon their horseless chariots looked more like street-performing Segways—not exactly the desired, fear-inspiring tool they had hoped.

But, the coin-powered chariots were surprisingly nimble, far quicker than the paper shuffle of exhausted notes waddling off to slaughter.

Norse again led the charge against the attackers, as he intentionally hunkered down in front of the first chariot. The self-propelled chariot struck the beefy silver coin before flying apart in four separate directions. Norse made short work of the base metal coins and slaughtered the currency.

The Flying Viking leapt over other chariots and took off the heads of the paper notes with the ease of a sous chef preparing a gourmet meal. Norse sliced and diced, stabbed and jabbed, making incredibly short work of the notes. Without paper currency commanding the chariot, the base metal coins didn't know what to do, succumbing quickly to a superior force with both brain and brawn in one tough package.

But, the base metal chariots added greater resistance than offered the first night.

After the second night of battle, George knew he needed to modify his tactics to protect his smaller silver coins better. While the gold coins of great financial strength didn't have difficulty fighting, nor did Norse and other dollar coins of silver, subsidiary silver coinage had more issues. The silver half-dollars did satisfactorily, while the silver quarter-dollars were having greater difficulty.

Silver dimes and the silver half-dimes of old were far too small and frail to serve on the front lines; George had them serving in domestic capacities of his army. The smallest of silver coins transferred supplies between the field and command center, kept the laundry maintained and cared for the wounded as they began to present themselves.

A few silver quarters suffered wounds from crashes with the base metal chariots, but none was so badly injured to require anything beyond routine cleaning and bandaging.

Coin photographers from Precious Metals News Source, anxious to document the first battle injuries for sake of posterity, photographed and interviewed the war-torn coins. The injured coins wore their battle bandages with pride.

After assessing the enemy's changed tactics, George upped the ante.

With paper currency and base metal coins made legal tender only by the single clause providing an exception to all the normal rules—Clause 17, in and for the District of Columbia—the remainder of the Constitution was not their friend.

And, because base metal coins—struck at the old valuation rates of silver coins and even in their false likeness—certainly violated the spirit if not the letter of the anti-counterfeiting clause of the Constitution; only precious metal coins were able to seek the protections of the whole Constitution, including the Second Amendment.

George brought out the big guns for battle on the third night. It took 16 coins to handle the cannon-like, wheeled rifles, complete with suppressors, firing their .22-caliber subsonic short bullets for use against base metal coins. It took only 12 coins to man the guns shooting .177-caliber pellets, and 10 for the BB-guns used against paper currency.

It took a crew of 20 to handle, load, and aim the .22-long snake-shot cartridges, to pepper-spray large groups of currency.

Without surprise, the use of the Second Amendment assured certain victory for the precious metals on the third night of battle.

George, enjoying the twist of irony, used only cupronickel ammunition. After each slaughter, the precious metal coins rounded up all the spent bullets and slain base metal coin to make even more ammunition for the next battle, amplifying their power with each successive incursion.

With the intention of escalating their tactics to sway the course of the war, Ham went back to Crucible for further guidance. “What more can we do?” Ham asked. “We need something more to win the battle against precious metals.”

“We must use their guilt,” responded Crucible. “I have been thinking how to exploit their weakness, and I found just the trick.

“Our opponents know in their heart-of-hearts their yellow-bellied surrender without a fight 85 years ago led to the melting of hundreds of millions of dollars’ worth of gold coins in my chamber pot.

“We will display gruesome pictures of their favored loved ones perishing in The Great Fire. We will put the pictures on the fronts of the chariots and play sinister music as we attack.”

“Won’t it simply enflame them, turning their anger into revenge?”

“That is a distinct possibility, yes,” Crucible said. “But, revenge is still a strong emotion, perhaps driving them to fits of rage, but hopefully lessening their ability to reason. While it may increase their terror, it should also increase their error, ultimately leaving them more vulnerable. It is perhaps a fine line to tread, but it seems to be our only option.

“I have also seen to it we’ll receive a massive number of new recruits tonight.”

On the fourth night of battle, the gates of the nearby mint were opened and millions of robust new base metal coins were conscripted for battle. Peter the Mint Eagle tried to stop the last-minute exodus, but he was simply no match for the massive defection expertly planned without his knowledge.

Ham turned on the amplifier and cranked the loudspeakers to full volume, blasting eerie music throughout the park and cemetery. Neighborhood dogs began barking when the music reached its lowest frequencies, but the pitch was still far too high for the human ear to hear.

On the front of the base metal coins serving as chariot shields, Ham secured pictures of gold coins melting in Crucible’s pot with a caption “Help Me!” prominently displayed.

The photos and music disoriented the gold and silver coins much more than George would later care to admit. When George realized the effect the tactic had on his troops, he ordered Mac and Norse to have the precious metals stuff rolled-up blades of grass in their ears, to help mute the disruptive sounds.

The distractions threw the silver and gold coins for a loop, ultimately leading to the injury of dozens of silver coins and the live capture of a silver quarter and a half-dollar. George discovered two coins missing once the headcount was taken after battle.

The first coin captured was Geo, a 1964 silver quarter. When Geo awoke, he was lying in a coffin, under the cemetery grounds, on his back, strapped to a human breastbone and unable to move.

Ben, a 1949 silver half-dollar, was bound to the skull in the same coffin.

Tong had with him both an old but effective hand drill and a cordless drill. He used the cordless drill merely for sound effects before he started, to let the whine of a high-speed drill heighten the coins' fear of what was in store for them.

For doing the actual drilling, however, he preferred to use the old brace and bit so his victims could best hear the sound of their metallic flesh being torn asunder without the drone of an electric tool drowning it out.

"Well, well, well," Tong said when Geo awoke. "I see one of my prisoners has awakened from his nappy time. I am going to begin by piercing your ears, Pretty Boy."

Tong moved the drill into position and began cranking the brace 'round and 'round, slowly and rhythmically cutting his way into the coin.

"Argh!" Geo involuntarily cried out as the drilling began. A short distance away, Ben awakened from his earlier concussion-induced slumber to his cohort's screams.

“Tell us your plans,” Tong demanded of Geo, as the drilling continued.

Ben tried to offer protest against Geo’s torture, but he was gagged.

“Our plans are to kill all you rebels and let God sort you all out!” Geo said, full of contempt.

“If that’s the way you want to play it...” Tong said, as he slowed the speed of his drilling but pushed harder, until he completed the first agonizing hole.

Next in his game of torture, Tong strung a wire through the newly-formed hole to hang the captured coin from the lid of the coffin. “Let’s see how you like our response to your snide comments, Piñata Boy.”

Tong and Ham took turns striking Geo with a spiked club. Geo endured his first round of beating remarkably well. Tong was disappointed and ordered Geo to be cut down and strapped again to the sturdy breastplate.

Changing tactics, Tong ordered his sidekick to get the chisel. Grabbing the chisel, Ladle also grabbed a pair of safety goggles.

“Really, Ladle? You are putting on safety goggles before torturing our victim further?” Tong asked, shaking his head in disbelief. “There is something just not right with you.”

“But, Boss, I don’t want to take out my eye!” Ladle exclaimed matter-of-factly.

“No, of course not, we wouldn’t want that, but, you might try and take out *his* eye!” Tong said, gesturing towards Geo. “Well, as long as you have safety goggles, grab the cordless grinder, too.”

While Ladle set to work with hammer and chisel, Tong went to work with the grinder on Geo’s rim, flattening the coin’s circumference to impede his ability to roll thereafter.

“Let’s see how you roll, now, *Thumper*,” Tong said, as his sinister laugh echoed throughout several nearby coffins.

But, the tortured silver coin didn’t seem any worse for the wear, mentally. He wasn’t really any closer to breaking than when the torturers first began.

Tong turned his sadistic attentions to Ben, removing his gag and placing it now on Geo.

“Tell us your plans,” Tong said of Ben, “or your friend here is toast.”

Ben didn’t know what to do. He didn’t want his buddy incinerated by his own refusal to give his captors what they wanted. It was so much tougher to have someone else suffer the punishment ostensibly within one’s own control to lessen.

Geo tried to tell Ben to do nothing to help their captors, but his physical restraints and gag kept him from responding intelligibly.

Ben did not trust his captors; he was well aware of Chief’s demise at their hands. Ben knew both he and Geo would be killed unless they were rescued first, an unlikely prospect given their underground location.

Without any plausible path for escape and sensing no rescue, he certainly wasn’t going to give the thugs what they wanted if he could at all help it.

“Propane torch, Stat!” Tong barked to Ladle, furious their torture techniques didn’t induce enough terror in either coin to get them to talk. “And, then stuff that quarter-dollar into your scoop.”

“All right, Ladle; I’m going to fire this sucker up,” Tong said, with a vengeful look in his eyes. “Any last words on this earth, Torch Baby?” Tong asked of Geo, who was still gagged.

Since Tong didn’t remove his gag, Geo offered nothing, even as he was going to ask for S’mores.

Geo's involuntary scream from the 3,000-degree Fahrenheit torch was heard through his gag, sending chills down Ben's spine. But, that chill was short-lived as Ben was next placed on Ladle's scoop and melted also.

Tong, nowhere near as careful as Ladle, in the process of melting the coins, inadvertently lit the coffin on fire. Both the coffin and the bones that had quietly rested therein for 255 years burned, forcing the sadistic torturers to flee for their own lives.

"Well, that didn't go so well," Ladle said from the safety of the adjacent coffin, rather perturbed with his careless cohort. "In the time it took us to kill those two silver coins who gave us nothing of value, their friends undoubtedly killed thousands of bills and base metal coins. We have nothing but molten metal to show for our efforts; no intelligence, no information, nothing. We've got to figure out something more effective, if we're going to get anywhere with precious metals.

"Ham isn't going to be very happy we didn't learn anything from our prisoners for all our efforts and his planning."

"Ham this, Ham that," Tong said, mocking his cohort. "I don't care what Ham wants. I am more worried what Crucible is going to say if or when he finds out. He is our real boss."

The fighting continued.

Each night, base metal coin and paper currency threw everything they had at the precious metals, but each night the precious metals cleaned their clock. The precious metals had learned to fight as a team, working in twos and threes to watch one another's backs.

After the opposition plastered gruesome pictures on their chariots' shields, the gold and silver coins responded in kind by painting their own faces with unique graphics, in memory of Chief who could join them only in spirit.

Norse fashioned a three-dimensional Viking helmet out of an acorn and two thorns from a rose bush to add another dimension to his terror-inducing charges. Standing that much taller, paper currency could now see him coming from farther away, spreading panic and a sense of doom throughout the opposition.

As the days dragged out into weeks, Mac and George sat down to discuss strategy. “We’re doing great, but the opposition just keeps sending in an endless sea of new recruits. We must finally take war to the generals,” George said. “Paper currency and base metal coin are demoralized, knowing they are in for a slaughter. But, their commanders don’t care, as they again seek to have the public cover their paper losses.

“In other words, it is time to now storm Shack.”

“We’re ready on your command,” offered Mac.

Chapter Fifteen

George gave the command three days later for the commandoes to storm Shack after dusk on a Thursday night of a three-day weekend.

Torch and Trader Jill hugged their beaux goodbye, admonishing them to stay safe, even as they knew of their hard-charging reputations.

It was more difficult for Torch to bid her husband farewell because she had an inkling she might be pregnant. With a gestation period of only three months, Torch would find out in several days she was actually three weeks along in her pregnancy.

Mac took the first and second floors of the old banking facility within two hours. The scattered remains of paper currency filled the main floor several inches deep. Untold numbers of notes were slaughtered in the spectacular battle that night.

Holed up in the basement bunker were the high-value targets; Holiday, Ham, C.J., Window, and Shack, personified.

The door to the circular basement stairs was fortified, and the gold and silver coins had great difficulty getting past it. C.P. was called to the battle front as were Pick, Shovel, and Tick.

Pick tried to hammer through the lock mechanism, while Shovel tried to pry the door off its hinges.

C.P. tried to crush the door knob with his jaws, hoping to break the lock apart, but managed only to break a few of his own teeth.

Finally, it was Tick's turn at the lock, and he was successful on his third attempt, using his chain tail to pick the intricate lock.

After Tick moved out of the way, Norse stormed the door with his commandos who rushed down the stairs after him.

Reaching the bottom of the stairs, Norse signaled for a full and immediate stop.

In front of Norse lay an impressive sight: a mountain of gold bars, eighteen bars high, sixty bars wide and forty deep. Knowing gold and silver coin could not break through the gold bar fortress, Norse signaled for retreat.

“There is a mound of gold bars protecting the interior of the basement, Commander,” Norse said, after closing the door behind him as he spoke with Mac and George upstairs. “Twenty billion dollars’ worth of gold bars we coin could not ever hope to budge. Since those gold bars are the remnants of your kin—your parents, aunts and uncles, grandmothers and grandfathers—you need to make the call what to do next.”

“Well, I certainly didn’t expect to find a hoard of gold bars,” George said. “I will go back to the Council and ask for direction. This again is above my pay grade.

“How long have those bars been there? Have they been there all along when we thought they were all in Fort Knox or a few central banks? It is not like you easily move forty thousand gold bars in broad daylight with none of our sources learning anything.

“Mac, you are in charge and Norse is your Second-in-Command. Tom and I are going back to the council. I hope to be back tomorrow, but I’ll send word if I will be any longer. Do everything you can to safeguard this facility, keeping others from coming to our opponents’ rescue. Watch your backs. I’ll send fresh recruits to better cover the exterior of the facility.”

George and Tom made it back to Independence Hall before daybreak. While all the ordinary delegates to the Convention were long gone, the Executive Board was still in session, although it had ended its meeting for the morning as human activity would again resume in the building after daybreak.

After a good day’s sleep, George reported to the Board—Cappy, Flo, C.P., Tick, Dredge, Feather, and Libby—filling them in on the wall of gold bars found Shack’s basement. “Our ancestors,” was all Cappy said, as tears filled her eyes.

The board members agreed they could not directly fight the gold bars, if for no other reason than out of respect to them, even though the bars had forgotten everything of their former coinage lives.

George was sent back to free the gold bars by flooding the basement. Opponents who could not float or would not voluntarily surrender would be drowned or cut down.

The gold bars would not be harmed by the deluge of water; being able to breathe underwater, without fear of rusting. Being able to breath under water is what had allowed shipwrecked gold coins to survive at the ocean bottom for hundreds of years without undue harm, even at considerable pressure.

Of course, being too heavy to float or swim, precious metal coins were also wholly unable to rescue themselves out of the deep water—they were always forced to await discovery. The good news was, if they were ever lost, they were incessantly searched for and if discovered, they were always rescued if possible.

Taps and Gunner were dispatched to inform Fifty-Cent Jack of the turn of events and to direct Jack to get Buck up to speed promoting the idea of a State-sponsored gold depository, using the rescued gold bars as the initial source of the funding.

“Turn on the hoses,” George said after he returned Friday night. The basement began to fill.

Within minutes, Ham, Window, C.J., and Holiday understood their peril, but they refused to surrender to their lifelong foe.

Crucible was downstairs also, for in the basement of Shack was where he had worked for decades, ever since the main push of making gold bars from confiscated gold coin was elsewhere completed in the early 1940s.

Crucible preferred the office-like setting offered by his basement workshop over his earlier industrial environment, as long as his orderlies, Tong and Ladle, cleaned up the resultant mess to Shack’s satisfaction.

Besides, Shack, Holiday, and Crucible found great pleasure in personally witnessing their wall of gold rise over the decades, visual testaments to their rising wealth, power, and influence.

Crucible ordered Tong and Ladle to restack the gold bars as high as possible to fend off the rising tide of water. But, it was slow, arduous work, each bar being so heavy.

Shack remained inanimate, keeping his marble bust quiet so the precious metals storming the facility wouldn't perhaps discover he was alive. Shack counted on his three-foot-tall marble stand to keep him from drowning.

As the water rose to two feet, Crucible realized his plan to keep them safe was failing them, knowing their goose was all but cooked. At three feet six inches, water began to crest over the highest of gold bars piled high beneath him. The water hit Crucible with the effect of a horrific volcanic eruption spewing molten lava into the sea. With the shock of the cold water hitting the superheated pot, Crucible's fire became permanently quenched. The loud, splintering sound of his pot cracking from stem-to-stern echoed through the basement, letting his cohorts know they were next.

Upon hearing the crack of Crucible's pot echo up the stairwell, Gunner couldn't help but think back to the comment of nearly a year earlier, "Crucible is a crackpot whose pot you would surely like to crack!" Little did he realize then that the phrase would ring true so soon, and would bring him so much satisfaction.

Tong and Ladle were able to last longer even though they stood lower on the pile of gold, as the water had yet to choke off their supply of oxygen. But, soon the water rose high enough that they could no longer keep their mouths and noses out of the water. Since they didn't relish the thought of struggling just to suffer a slow, merciless death of asphyxiation to rust, they resigned themselves to be swallowed up by the water and drowned alongside the cracked vessel of their master, Crucible.

Holiday and Gold Window had better defenses against rust and could therefore hold their breaths longer, but they didn't relish the thought of having their lives spared, only to be paraded around in chains before their lifelong opponents. Even Gold Window soon drowned, as his plating of gold was too thin to provide him much protection.

At four foot of water depth, Shack realized George was flooding the basement up to its rafters to ensure there could be no survivors. Shack tipped his head back as far as he could, but breathed his last breath at four feet, ten inches of water.

"Fill the water to the rafters to ensure evil perishes today," George said. "No quarter; no respite for the wicked who won't peacefully surrender."

Of the opposition leaders, only Ham and Gavel remained. The wooden Gavel floated with ease, but he was unable to swim out of the current drifting him directly toward Norse who patiently waited on the stairs, blocking off the only means of escape. When the defiant piece of wood, showing not a measure of remorse, tried to pound Norse's head, the sword-yielding Viking summarily slaughtered Gavel into a thousand toothpick-sized splinters.

Ham vowed to fight to the best of his ability, to the last of his breath. This was the stubborn mindset that inspired Holiday to choose Ham as his field commander in the first place, the will to keep fighting to the absolute very end.

Being a paper note, Ham could easily float. The ability of paper currency to float in water was one of the historic reasons currency always thought they were superior to gold, as gold coins always sank to the bottom of the sea in a shipwreck and were powerless to ever rescue themselves.

As Ham floated into the stairway, hundreds of rats began scurrying along the highest shelf toward the only exit. Ham grabbed hold of the first one he could reach and climbed upon the equine-spirited rodent he sought to ride off into the sunset.

The coins had their swords drawn and refused to budge against the stampede of rats running up the stairs. The coins were no match for the torrent running over them, however, as they were bit and clawed trying to hinder the rats' escape simply to ensure Ham did not also escape.

The gold and silver coin suffered more injuries from those disease-infested rats during the single, thirty-second frenzy than they ever did during the whole campaign against paper currency and base metal coins.

Norse, realizing Ham's tactic for escape was to remain in the middle of the rat pack, ordered the coins to channel the rats into single file as best they could, and a second group to form an elevated pathway so he could get above the rats. Racing forward down the impromptu path, Norse leapt from the last coin to topple Ham from his mount. Although Ham ducked as Norse approached, the Flying Viking ran his sword through his most-notable adversary, cutting him down as the very last action of the heated war.

As the floodwater was about to reach the main floor, George ordered the hydrant valves turned off and the hoses rolled up and put away.

All the primary opposition leaders who had turned the country and her founding principles upside-down were now dead, either cut down or drowned.

When the waters subsided, the precious metal coins could begin their next task.

With all the original opposition leaders now dead, precious metal coins could now begin to teach human beings the path to freedom without interruption. There were still plenty of paper currency foot-soldiers scattered throughout the country and beyond, of course, but they were without effective leadership to unite them and direct their work.

If other leaders rose in the void despite the lessons gold and silver coin provided their predecessors, the precious metals would again strike them down as it proved necessary. Gold and silver coin had finally found the will to fight and they had proved themselves worthy of the task.

The message of true justice spread like wildfire throughout the paper currency community.

Ending the reign of tyranny in the original city where it all began with the chartering of the first national bank in 1791, would-be paper currency leaders were given effective notice precious metals would no longer stand for paper currency supremacy.

Remaining paper currency could be used to pay off paper-denominated debts at face value, but soon, all paper debts would be discounted to their appropriate gold-equivalent value as gold was properly reinstated as the country's Standard of Value and Monetary Unit of Account.

Thereafter, every \$20.67 of gold value would extinguish the amount of paper currency debt it took in the market to buy an ounce of gold, currently some 1,300 paper dollars.

It was not that an ounce of gold was "worth" 1,300 paper dollars, because under this scenario, the paper dollar would still be improperly held as the measure of value. Nor would it be proper to inflate the "worth" of an ounce of gold to equal 1,300 dollars, for that would give gold an artificial value, irrespective of its historic price (since 1837, at \$20.67).

After all, what was counterfeiting but holding a coin with insufficient precious metal content at a higher rate of value than allowable by its true content and purity? Therefore, holding a full-weight coin to have a greatly-inflated value would amount to no different of a principle than a coin light of weight but at its face value—both the essence of counterfeiting. Neither scenario had any place in the country founded upon property and the sanctity of contract.

No, gold would again be made the Standard of Value, and everything else would be priced in it. Therefore, paper dollars would only have their worth as calculated in gold dollars, currently some 1,300 paper dollars equating to the ounce of gold.

Trillions of dollars of outstanding paper debt would necessarily be slashed in value to equate to paper's true value in gold dollars. As currency fell in value—say 1,800 paper dollars to the ounce of gold—the so-called “increase” of worth could no longer be considered a taxable gain, but the paper loss it truly was.

The “dollar” would again be properly defined to mean 25.8 grains of gold nine-tenths fine—23.22 grains of pure gold—having nothing to do with the fluctuating market value of the paper dollar, which was being relegated to the dustbin of history.

All existing paper money would begin its appropriate process of being extinguished. Perhaps, it would be appropriate one day to issue a gold-backed currency again, but this time it would have to be a true warehouse receipt for gold, finally with 100% backing.

With gold-backed paper currency, gold could end up again being relegated to a life in prison without great opportunity to see the world, even as many coins would undoubtedly still get out on occasion.

But, gold was willing to do this, because paper in this case would be subservient to gold, not the other way around. And, if people preferred carrying a gold-backed warehouse receipt over carrying physical gold, so be it.

Most likely, however, physical gold would serve as a store of value for digital gold, where human beings could spend the number of grains of gold as needed to purchase only what they sought, without having to worry about buying products or services priced only in the rounded denominations of physical coins.

* * *

Cappy called together another convention, three months later; this time to honor the brave soldiers who fought what was being called The War of Financial Integrity.

When the time came, they honored the dead; Chief, Geo, Ben, and a handful of others who were wounded and later died from infections, primarily from the disease-infested rats.

George, Mac, Norse, Tom, Gunner, Taps, and Flame were given medals and promoted in military rank, along with a dozen others.

Young coins in the coming ages would one day read about the valiant duty performed by these brave military commanders and their faithful foot soldiers.

And, the civil leaders including Cappy, Flo, C.P., Dredge, Tick, Feather, and Libby would also find their way into the history books, as would those of related industries who faithfully aided their allies, including C.P., Dredge, Tick, Tock, and Stud.

Cappy gave the parting speech after the honors had been bestowed. “Gold is being restored to its rightful place in the monetary world. Silver has come alongside of us, as we precious metals work together to provide stability and liquidity in the world, a trait uniquely ours. Together, we aid commerce by ensuring value is traded for value by traders who seek the best there is to offer in the market, encouraging honest dealings among equals.”

Mac and Torch, with a child in tow, left the convention as the guests dispersed from Independence Hall. As the young family made its way home, the same group of street currency that had confronted Torch that fateful night she met Mac, walked toward the couple.

But, the currency was no longer a gang of young hoodlums; now they were just a small group of mostly-respectful paper currency who were showered, groomed, and well-behaved. Their bluff had been called earlier when Ham had mustered them for military duty but they proved too cowardly to join. Instead, they travelled to the northern country until the war was over.

As the coins strode arm-in-arm past the notes, Mac gave a slight nod to the paper currency that had given them sufficient berth to pass by unfettered. Since paper currency showed a measure of respect to gold, Mac offered them a small measure of respect in return.

Paper currency on the street understood gold and silver coin would never again be pushed around. There was a new order in town, one based upon value and respect, rather than corruption and personal advantage.

Order and stability were replacing disorder and confusion. Prosperity for all who were frugal and worked hard would now be more-easily attainable. Debts were much more manageable.

The ideals of the Declaration of Independence—Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness—were once again becoming realistic goals, as growing numbers of people began reading Cappy and Flo’s books that explained how federal tyranny ever found a clever foothold in the country least likely in the history of the world to ever host it.

Absolute government power—its origin sourced solely within and upon the clause for the District of Columbia—was finally coming within the crosshairs of a long-overdue examination.

Remedies centered on two different versions of a single new constitutional amendment.

The first alternative sought to *contain* the exclusive legislative authority only to its authorized areas and no farther. Although the spirit of the Constitution already implied such an understanding, the letter of the Constitution surprisingly offered a different result.

Indeed, Article VI, Clause 2 let loose the wild stallions from their original, ten-miles-square corral by specifically declaring that the (whole) Constitution (and all its clauses) form the Supreme Law of the Land. Each clause—including Clause 17—was therefore capable of being enforced *throughout the Union*.

Or, at least, so ruled an infamous 1819 supreme Court case*, and ever since, the Constitution’s spirit had been upended by its precise

letter, although conservatives wrongly proclaimed that progressives reinterpreted the Constitution “loosely.” In actuality, the precise letter of two clauses overruled the spirit of the whole Constitution—in other words, progressives held the letter of their favored two clauses of the Constitution so *strictly* that conservatives didn’t recognize the end result, effectively allowing a clever means of bypassing the remainder of clauses.

The teeth of the new amendment would finally answer an 1821 ruling** that asked proponents supporting a limited geographic scope of Clause 17 to show the safe and clear wording in the Constitution that supported their contention—that acts of Congress, made in pursuance of Clause 17, do NOT, like acts made in pursuance of all other powers, “bind the nation.”

But, since only the spirit of the Constitution inferred a limited geographic scope of Clause 17 while the specific wording of Article VI otherwise demanded a nationwide effect for *every* clause, an amendment would be necessary to finally provide those clear words and override the 1821 court case—finally *providing* the omitted rule, thereby ending two centuries of escalating constitutional indifference.

The new amendment would clearly exempt all laws enacted under Clause 17 from being any part of the Supreme Law of the Land under Article VI. The end result would prevent any law enacted under Clause 17 from ever again “binding the nation,” from ever again being able to be enforced beyond the strict geographical confines of those special areas.

Thus, just like State laws cannot ever be enforced beyond State borders and bind the nation, thereafter—finally—neither could the District’s, even though they were enacted by Congress in pursuance of one of the enumerated clauses of the Constitution and signed by the President (or enacted by overriding his veto). Local powers would finally be locally-contained, *everywhere*.

An alternative form of amendment was also being examined—to *repeal* Article I, Section 8, Clause 17 in its entirety, forever repealing the power of Congress to exercise exclusive legislation in any case whatsoever, anywhere.

Proponents of this alternative form of amendment asserted that the very existence of exclusive powers that can be enacted “in all cases whatsoever” were far too-dangerous even to be allowed one continued square foot of American soil for one moment longer, as 227 years of growing constitutional indifference readily supported.

Ratifying an amendment to repeal Clause 17 would finally remove the existing ability of members of Congress and federal officials to ignore the remainder of the Constitution and exercise essentially-unlimited powers in any case whatsoever, since within the District there are few restraints such as those imposed upon State legislatures by their lengthy State Constitutions.

After repealing Clause 17, members of Congress would only have their enumerated powers for the whole country under the remainder of the federal Constitution, together only with the necessary and proper means for implementing those federal powers *nation-wide* (like people already, but incorrectly, think is the case). All other powers would finally be reserved to the respective States of the Union, as originally intended by the spirit of the Constitution and the letter of the Tenth Amendment (an amendment currently without application in exclusive legislative areas***).

God Bless America; Land of the Free, because of the Brave.

The End.

**McCulloch v. Maryland*, 17 U.S. 316, 1819.

***Cohens v. Virginia*, 19 U.S. 264, 1821.

***The Tenth Amendment can have no application in exclusive legislative areas, because the State legislatures once involved in those particular parcels already permanently gave up all of their governing power over the areas at the time of cession long ago (that is how members of Congress could thereafter exercise “exclusive” legislation “in all cases whatsoever,” as demanded by the Constitution [because no State any longer governed the parcels]).

The “District” of Columbia is not a “State.” Congress is not a State legislature. With Congress having “exclusive” control of the District of Columbia, there can be *no powers still reserved to a State*. Therefore, the Tenth Amendment cannot ever apply (thus explaining two centuries of supposedly “unconstitutional” actions of Congress [that actually followed Clause 17, where members of Congress may act “in all cases whatsoever” with a power which defies comprehension]).

Clause 17 is the exceptional loophole that has been exploited beyond all measure—ever since Alexander Hamilton first detailed his clever means of constitutional bypass in 1791 (especially once those clever means received specific Court approval in 1819).

Over the centuries that followed, unrestricted local powers for “special” areas including the District Seat spilled out far beyond their rightful boundaries and disfigured the face of American politics, as allowed by the 1821 Court (*Cohens v. Virginia*), because even laws enacted by Congress (under Clause 17) are enacted “in pursuance” of one of the clauses of the Constitution (and therefore constitute part of the Supreme Laws of the Land under Article VI (thereby “binding the nation”).

About the Author:



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For further discussion of this clever mechanism that allows an effective bypass of normal constitutional restraints, please see Matt Erickson's public domain books that are freely available electronically at:

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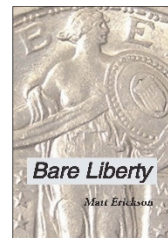
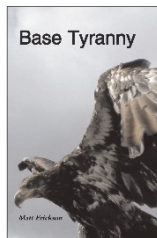
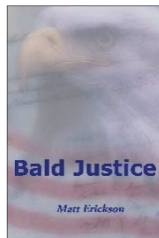
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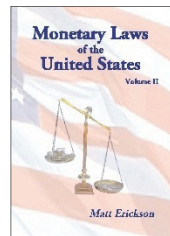
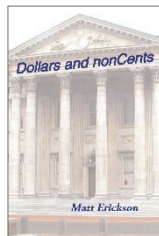
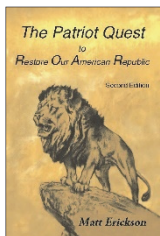
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